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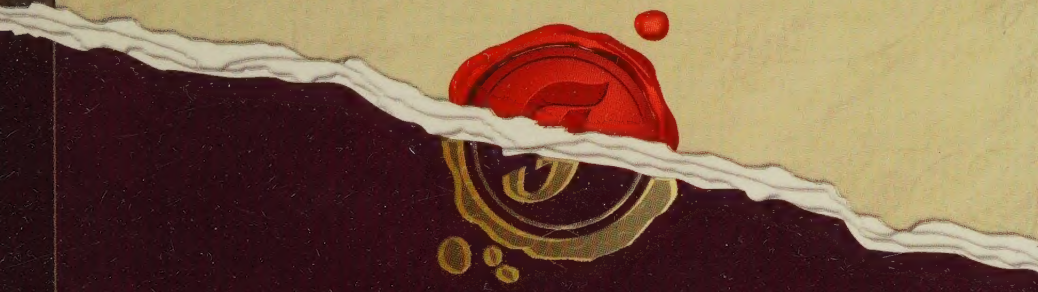

by
Eleanor Hull

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EARLY CHRISTIAN IRELAND

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BY

ELEANOR HULL

AUTHOR OF "THE CUCHULLIN SAGA IN IRISH LITERATURE"
"PAGAN IRELAND" ETC.

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INTRODUCTION.

In the following account of the Social and Church life of Christian Ireland, I have, as far as possible, let the old records tell their own story, refraining from unnecessary comment. My object is not to discuss the position and religious beliefs of the Irish Church, but to show the practical effect of its influence on the daily life of the people. There will always be questions connected with the discipline and doctrines of the Irish Church which will be answered differently according to the stand-point from which we set out to examine them. So much attention has been concentrated upon these questions, that it would sometimes seem as though the whole history of this most interesting period of the nation's life were supposed to be dependant on the solution that is given to them. Meanwhile, the clear and fascinating picture of the social life of the time, given in the lives of the early saints, and the remarkable developments in the national character and conditions consequent on their teaching and system of things, have been lost sight of. From a purely historical point of view, a clear grasp of these changes and conditions is essential, and it is on these that we have fixed our attention.

In much the same way, amid the scholastic discussions to which the personality and work of St. Patrick have given rise, the only Patrick of whose identity there can be no doubt has been lost sight of. The Patrick who wrote those invaluable "Confessions" which are still in our hands may not be as striking a personality to the popular mind, or come with such professed credentials, as the numerous shadowy St. Patricks who have been substituted for him. Yet he is at least a real man; and a man who, amid deep discouragements and opposition from both foes and friends, accomplished, according to his own showing, a great work. We have allowed this real St. Patrick to speak in his own words with as little addition as possible from later and more doubtful authorities.

To understand this period and the influence exercised by the Church in political affairs, it is essential to read the Ecclesiastical and Secular History side by side. At the same time, the manner in which these two contemporaneous stories are presented to us by the old historians is so different that it is impossible to mix them without experiencing a sense of incongruity. In enlarging the facts of the political history, the old writers fell inevitably into the manner of the pure romance; they so mingled the facts with picturesque additions drawn from their own imagination, that it is difficult to distinguish the historical tales from those which are more confessedly fabulous, and difficult again to sift the

kernel of fact from the imaginative setting in which it is placed. We are still in a world half-real, half-touched by fancy. As time goes on, the imaginative accretions become fewer, and we arrive at length in the region of unadorned fact; but even up to the Battle of Moira, which occurred near the close of the period we are now considering, as well as in some tales of the Norse epoch, much imaginative detail as well as much inflated description has been added.

The authors of the saints' lives felt that this class of tale was out of place in writings intended for the edification of the faithful; and though they too had their conventional setting, the setting of miracle, there is a simplicity and directness about many of the Irish Lives that places us at once in intimate touch with the conditions of their day. Except Adamnan's invaluable Latin Life of St. Columba, the Irish Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore seem to me unapproached in hagiological literature for naïvete, freshness and picturesqueness, and I know of no material which places so clearly before us the social conditions of the time. I have therefore drawn largely upon this source of information.

In correct chronological order, the lives of St. Brigit and St. Finnian of Clonard should precede that of St. Columcille; Brigit lived near to the time of St. Patrick, and Finnian was the teacher of Columcille; but the latter played so much more important a part in the

political life of his time, and sums up in his career so much of Irish mediæval church history, that I have thought well to give him the place of prominence which he actually occupied in his own day. Two of the most important figures on the historical canvas of early Ireland are St. Columcille and St. Adamnan; their influence predominated over both secular and ecclesiastical affairs; and to be rightly understood, their lives should be read in connection with the political history of the time. The convictions of Adamnan led him to counteract, in some important particulars, the teaching and organisation of his great predecessor, and to renounce for his church that independent position which it had so long maintained, and which it parted with only after near a century of struggle; our satisfaction at his success will be regulated by the point of view from which his action is regarded, but of the far-reaching importance of the step he took, there can be only one opinion. His death brings to a close the history of the home development of the Celtic Church in Ireland, as the Synod of Whitby, forty years before, ended its independent career in the sister island.

I have placed the political history first, as some knowledge of the outward circumstances of the time is essential to enable the reader to obtain a grasp of the conditions amid which the Christian organisation had its rise and development.

I am indebted to the late Rev. M. Moloney,

whose death will long be lamented by his friends, for reading some chapters of this book in manuscript and for making several suggestions that have been useful to me; also to Rev. Malvine Youngman, who is engaged in a collation of the Irish codices for the Oxford Edition of the Vulgate, for reading Chapter XXI., and for much interest and help always ungrudgingly given. And to Dr. Whitley Stokes, who was good enough to spare time, amidst his heavy labours, to read a couple of chapters for me.

NOTE—The Irish names, both of persons and places, must always present a difficulty to readers unacquainted with the Gaelic language. Where a recognised English equivalent exists I have either used it or given it in brackets; as Suibhne (Sweeny), Muirchertach (Murtough), Magh-Rath (Moira), Almhain (Allen), Sligeach (Sligo). Many of the less common names have, however, no equivalent in English and in these cases I have thought it better to retain the form actually used in the Irish annals rather than to coin a name which, though it might imitate the pronunciation, would probably present no likeness whatever to the eye. Nothing is more confusing than the variety of spellings used in Irish for the same name; in addition to this, each modern writer adopts his own nomenclature, making confusion worse confounded for the unfortunate learner.

In the Chronology especially, therefore, I have adhered to the actual forms, in order that any reader who wishes to turn to the authorities themselves, may not be needlessly discouraged by failing to discover the names that he is in search of. It is to be noted by the English reader that when a double name, such as Congal Claen or Tuathal Maelgarbh, is met with, the second name is not an equivalent for

the modern sur-name, which did not then exist, but is an adjective denoting some quality or peculiarity by which the individual was known.

I have retained certain old names, such as Alba for Scotland and Hi for Iona, because they were the only ones known at the time with which we are dealing, and a false element is introduced by antedating the change. I have, however always added the modern form.

CHRONOLOGY

Note.—The dates given are those of the Four Masters, but they are generally a year or two (or more) in arrears. All the Annals differ widely amongst themselves as to the Chronology. For the more important events I have added the accepted dates.

ANNO
DOM.

429-458—Reign of Laegaire (Leary), son of Niall of the Nine Hostages.

431—Pope Celestine sent Palladius to preach "to the Scots (i.e., Irish) believing in Christ." He is said to have landed in Leinster and founded three wooden churches, where he left books and relics. He died on his way back to Rome.

432—St. Patrick came to Ireland.

457—Laegaire taken prisoner by the men of Leinster at Ath-Dara, but released.

457—Ard-Macha (Armagh) founded by St. Patrick.

458—Laegaire killed by the elements.

459-478—Reign of Oilioll *Molt*, son of Dathi.

461—Death of St. Patrick.

478—Oilioll *Molt* killed in the Battle of Ocha.

479-503—Reign of Lugaidh (Lewy), son of Laegaire. He is killed by a flash of lightning at Achadh-Farcha. From this time to Malachy II. all the Kings of Tara were of the race of the Hy Neill.

498 (506)—Feargus Mór (Fergus the Great) went with his brothers to Scottish Dalriada.

504-527—Reign of Muirchertach Mór Mac Erca (Murtough the Great). He was drowned and burned at Cleiteach (Cletty) on the Boyne.

520-1—Birth of St. Columcille.

525—St. Bridget, Abbess of Cill-Dara (Kildare), died.

528-538—Reign of Tuathal *Mael-garbh* (Toole the "rough bald one"). He is slain by the tutor of Diarmaid Mac Cearbhall (Dermot Mac Karval).

537—Battle of Sligeach (Sligo), in which Eoghan (Owen) Bel, King of Connaught, fell by Fergus and Domnall, sons of Muirchertach Mac Erca.

538?-558 (565)—Reign of Diarmaid Mac Cearbhall (Dermot Mac Karval).

543—The "Buidhe Conaill" or Great Plague, "swept away a third part of the human race."

545-6—Columcille founded the Church of Doire (Derry).

548—Death of St. Ciaran, Abbot of Clonmacnois.

549 (563)—Death of St. Finnian the Wise, abbot of Clonard on the Boyne.

554—Church of Beannchoir Mór (Bangor the Great), founded by St. Comgall.

554 (560)—The last Feis of Teamhair (Tara) was made by King Diarmaid.

555 (561)—Battle of Cuil-Dreimhne (Cúildrevny) between the Cinel Conaill and Cinel Eoghan (the O'Neills and O'Donnells) with St. Columcille, against King Diarmaid.

557 (563)—St. Columcille leaves Ireland and goes to Hi (Iona) in Alba (Scotland).

558 (565)—Diarmaid Mac Cearbhall slain at Rath Beg.

559-561—Joint reigns of Domhnall (Donall) and Fearghus (Fergus), sons of Muirchertach Mac Erca. They gained the Battle of Gabra Liffe over Leinster.

563—Death of St. Laissren or Molaisi of Daimhinis (Devenish, on L. Erne).

564-567—Reign of Ainmire, son of Setna.

571 (573)—Death of St. Brendan of Birr.

567 (571)—Death of Eochaid (Eochy) the Fair and Baetan, joint Kings.

568 (?)-594 (598)—Reign of Aedh, son of Ainmire.

575—The Convention of Drum-ceat, held by Aedh, s. of Ainmire. Aedan, son of Gabhran, King of Scottish Dalriada, and St. Columcille were present.

576 (577)—Death of St. Brendan of Clonfert.

594 (598)—Aedh, son of Ainmire, slain at Dunbolg in avenging the death of his son, Cumuscach.

597—Death of St. Columcille at Hi (Iona). St. Augustine lands in England.

595 (597)-600 (604)—Joint reigns of Aedh Slaine and Colman Rimidh, slain 604.

600 (601)—Death of St. Comgall of Beannchoir (Bangor, Co. Down).

601-607—Reign of Aedh (Hugh) *Uaridhnach* "of the Ague."

608-610—Reign of Maelcobha, son of Aedh Mac Ainmire. Slain by Suibhne *Menn.*

611-623—Reign of Suibhne (Sweeny) *Menn.*

617—Death of St. Caemhghin (Kevin) of Glendalough.

622—Battle of Carn Feradaig by Failbe Flann over Guaire Aidne of Connaught.

623 (627)—Suibhne *Menn* slain at Traigh-Brena by Congal *Caech*, "squint-eyed," or *Claen* "one-eyed," King of Ulad.

624-639 (642)—Reign of Domhnall (Donell), son of Aedh, son of Ainmire. The Battle of Dun-Ceithern gained by him over Congal Claen.

624—Birth of St. Adamnan.

629—Death of Eochaid *Buidhe*, son of Aedan, King of Dalriada.

634 (637)—Battle of Magh Rath (Moira, Co. Down), gained by Domhnall over Congal *Claen*.

640 (642)—Reign of Conall *Cael*, "the Slender," and Ceallach, grandsons of Aedh, s. of Ainmiri.

N.B.—The succession of the Kings is hereabouts very uncertain.

645 (648)—Raghallach, King of Connaught, killed.

645 (648)—Battle of Carn Conaill (Co. Galway), gained by Diarmaid, son of Aedh Slaine against Guaire *Aidne* of Connaught.

647—Two sons of Blathmac, son of Aedh Slaine, drowned by men of Leinster in the Mill of Maelodran (Co. Westmeath).

657-664—Joint reigns of Diarmaid *Ruadnaidh* and Blathmac, sons of Aedh Slaine.

661—St. Cummine *Fada*, "the tall," Bishop of Cluain-Fearta-Breanainn (Clonfert), died.

662—Guaire *Aidne* of Connaught died.

664—The Great Pestilence decimated Western Europe. Kings Diarmaid and Blathmac died of it, also the Abbots of Clonard, Fore, Clonmacnois, and other monasteries.

665—Reign of Sechnasech, s. of Blathmac.

666-669—Fresh outbreak of the Plague, or "Buidhe Conaill." Four Abbots of Bangor died of it in succession.

670—Reign of Ceannfaeladh, s. of Blathmac.

674—Reign of Finnachta *Fleadhach*, "the Festive," who slew Ceannfaeladh in the Battle of Aircealtair.

682—Domhnall *Breac*, King of Dalriada, killed in battle with the Britons.

683—Magh Breagh (East Meath) devastated by Northumbrians under Berchus.

684—Great mortality of cattle.

687—Adamnan brings 60 captives back to Ireland from Northumbria.

694—Reign of Loingseach. Slain with three sons in the Battle of Corann, by Ceallach, s. of Raghalach, 701.

697—Adamnan again in Ireland; he promulgates the Cáin Adamnain, exempting women from warfare. St. Moling of Luachra died.

702—Reign of Conal of Ceann Maghair.

703—Adamnan induced the South of Ireland to observe the Canonical Easter.

704—Death of Adamnan, Abbot of Hi (Iona).
Death of Ceallach, son of Raghallach, King of Connaught, after becoming a priest.

709—Reign of Fearghal. Killed in the Battle of Almhain (Allen, Co. Kildare).

719—Reign of Fogartach. Killed in the Battle of Delgean by Cineath (Kenneth), son of Irgalach.

720—Reign of Cineath, son of Irgalach, killed in the Battle of Druim-Corcrain.

723—Reign of Flaithbheartach (Flaherty), son of Loingseach. He sends for a fleet of vessels from Dalriada to fight the men of Ulster.

729—Flaithbheartach resigns his crown and dies in the Monastery of Armagh.

730—Reign of Aedh (Hugh) Allan. He almost extirpates the Leinstermen in the Battles of Ath-Seanaith and Allen.

738—Aedh Allan falls in battle at Magh 'Seirigh (near Kells) with Domhnall, s. of Murchadh.

739 (743)-758 (763)— Reign of Domhnall (Donall) first King of Clann-Colmain. He reigns twenty years and dies in his bed.

759—Reign of Niall Frosach. A great famine in his reign.

766—Reign of Donnchadh, s. of Domhnall. Reigned twenty-seven years.

790 (794)—The first Gentiles appeared off Reachrainn Isle and plundered.

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PART I.

IRELAND UNDER HER NATIVE RULERS.

CHAPTER I.

KING LAEGAIRE (LAERY) (429-458) AND THE TIMES OF ST. PATRICK.

Authorities: Tripartite Life of St. Patrick, Edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes; Introduction to the Senchus Mór; Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore, Edited by Dr. Wh. Stokes.

WITH the reign of Laegaire (Laery), son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, we reach a turning point in the history. From this time forward, paganism, which had gradually lost its hold upon a large number of the people through their connection with foreign nations, such as Britain and Gaul, which were professedly Christian, ceased to be the national form of belief, and Christianity took its place. It is probable that for a long time back there had been some Christians in Ireland, for you remember that it is said that even King Cormac mac Airt, over a hundred and fifty years before, professed himself to believe in Christ, of whom he had probably heard during his foreign wars or his sojourn in Alba. We learn, too, that early in Laery's reign, the Pope had

heard that there were already many Christians in Ireland, and he sent a missionary, named Palladius, to preach to them; but Palladius does not seem to have succeeded in Ireland, probably partly because he did not speak the native tongue, so that people could not understand him; in any case, he went away again soon afterwards. It was then that St. Patrick took his place, and did so much to root out the remains of paganism and plant the Christian faith in Ireland. Of his labours, which occupied the best part of a long life-time, we shall have to speak in separate chapters.* It is interesting to see how, in its outward organisation and methods of work, the new religion adapted itself to the habits and ways of life of the people; the Christian settlements that grew up all over the country in the time of the great saints, Columcille, Finnian and their contemporaries, though they were called monasteries, were in reality little villages, partly schools and partly industrial establishments, bound together by the worship of the church, and under the authority and guidance of some great saint or teacher, who became their abbot and spiritual father. The little simple churches and oratories formed the centre of the community, into which all who professed the Christian faith or wished to be taught it, were welcome to come; each new-comer built his own hut, and took part in the life of the place; the young were taught reading as well as religion, and from their

* See Chapters IX., X.

importance as educational establishments, these settlements were generally looked upon as great schools of secular and religious instruction. When the Northmen came to Ireland, the only places they could find to attack besides the forts of the chiefs were these religious foundations; so much had they become the centres of life of the population. They were, in fact, the only thing approaching to a town that existed. Sometimes the huts and tiny churches built of wood and wattle were destroyed by the Northmen several times in one year, and all their reliquaries, books and treasures were carried off or set on fire, yet the marauders would return again and again, which shows that it was not merely for what they could get that they came. These establishments were not by any means defenceless, as is generally supposed; for all the "family," as the members of a monastic settlement called themselves, could fight and did fight, and such a large body of men living together often made a formidable army, though they seldom seem to have been able to defend their monasteries successfully from the Northmen.

This kind of monastery was peculiar to Celtic Britain and Ireland : we do not find quite the same kind of establishment elsewhere; it grew out of the needs of the nation, and nothing could have been better fitted to advance the industrial, educational, and religious life of the people. These settlements were centres of light and industry for each part of the country in which they

were placed, and from them not only a love of religion but a knowledge of agriculture, and a desire for learning spread over the country, so that the whole land became covered with offshoots from these great religious schools, grouped together under the headship of one of the chief monasteries, whose Abbot was the superior of the whole group.

Just the same system that we find in Ireland existed at the same time in Britain and the South of Alba (Scotland). The monasteries founded by St. Asaph, St. Kentigern, St. David, St. Gildas, etc., in Wales, Cumberland, and the Lowlands, were exactly on the same plan, they included the whole Christian population; and it was probably from their example that the system was introduced into Ireland. They were centres of Christian influence in countries still largely pagan.

We are not to think of Christianity as making its way suddenly over the whole country; in spite of the efforts of St. Patrick, and the multitude of converts of whom he speaks, the people at large were heathen for some time after his work was ended. Even the kings, to whom he specially addressed himself, did not obey his call, and up to Columcille's days, the monarchs of Tara were still more than half heathen. We find them clinging to their Druids, who seem to have set themselves steadily against Christianity, and indulging in all sorts of old superstitious practices. Laery, the King to whom St. Patrick preached, was one of these; he remained a stout

pagan to the end, and declined to adopt the new religion. There is a curious story told that he said he would believe St. Patrick if he would bring up the old Irish hero, Cuchulain, from the dead, and get him to perform his feats before him. But though it is said in the legend that Cuchulain did appear to him, and bid him accept the teaching of St. Patrick, he gave only a half-hearted heed to the command.

One thing of importance that he did do was to re-arrange the laws with the help of St. Patrick, omitting some of the old practices that were not permitted by Christianity. Nine men of learning, namely, three chiefs, three bishops, and three druids are said to have met together to consult over this important revision of the legal code, and it was then accepted in the public assembly as the law of the land. It is possible that it had never been actually written down before; but in any case, changes became necessary after the introduction of the Christian system. Even if the story of St. Patrick himself having had a hand in the revision should not be true, the laws were eventually amended according to his teaching.

The chief part of Laery's reign was taken up in wars with Leinster about the Boromhe or Tribute imposed and exacted by Tara. At the Battle of Ath-Dara or Adare, Laery was taken prisoner by the King of Leinster, who would not release him until he had sworn a solemn oath by all the Elements, and by the sun and

the wind that he would never more come into Leinster to exact the Tribute. But only two years later, we find him breaking his solemn promise, and again raiding Leinster for the purpose of lifting the Boromhe. It is said that the Elements by whom, after the pagan fashion, he had sworn, took vengeance on him for breaking his vow, and he perished by sunstroke or by some sudden storm on the banks of the stream beside which he was driving off the cattle that he had taken from Leinster. So furious was his wrath against Leinster, and so bitter his hatred of that province, that he commanded that his body should be buried standing up, clothed in full armour, with his face turned towards Leinster, so that for ever he might bring them ill-luck. This was done, and the rath, still called Rath Laegaire, or the Rath of Laery, is distinctly traceable on the southern flanks of Tara Hill. Though the Boromhe continued to be exacted by the Kings of Tara long after Laery's time, few obtained it without a battle. Laegaire's successor, Oiloll Molt, a son of Dathi, was killed in one of these frays, called the Battle of Ocha, which was fought in 478 A.D. near Tara; in this battle the princes of the North and Lugaid (Lewy), Laery's son, united with the King of Leinster, and it is probable that on this occasion the Boromhe was made an excuse for a war that was really organised to recover the succession for the houses of Niall and Eoghan. Lugaid or Lewy, who succeeded, was not an important king; he was killed by a flash of lightning at Achadh-farcha(?) in 503 A.D.

CHAPTER II.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE KINGDOM OF SCOTLAND.

Authorities: Annals of Tighernach; Scottish Annals, and Irish additions to the "Historia Britonum," from the Book of Ballymote, published in the Chronicles of the Picts and Scots (Rolls' Series); Adamnan's "Life of St. Columba," Edited by Reeves; Romance called "The Death of Muirchertach Mac Erca," Edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes (Rev. Celt, XXIII, 1902).

You will remember that some time before this, settlements of Irish had passed over from the North of Ireland to the western coast of Scotland. Niall of the Nine Hostages had on one occasion gone to their assistance, for they were a weak colony in the midst of a large population of Picts, who must have often threatened them with extinction. This little colony emerges about the time of which we are now writing into great importance, and we have to trace its development from a small beginning into the great kingdom which it afterwards became. About this time it was strengthened by the passing over from Dalriada in Ireland of three brothers, chieftains, who became known as "The Three Powerfuls of Dalriada." Their names were Loarn, Angus, and Fergus Mór. Loarn was the first to reign over the settlement, to which about a hundred and fifty followers of his own were added, but the fame of Fergus, who

succeeded him, eclipses that of the others, and he is generally spoken of as the founder of the kingdom of Scottish Dalriada. The name of Loarn is however still retained in the family of the Duke of Argyle, whose eldest son is styled the Marquis of Loarn, or Lorne. They settled in Argyle and continued the old name and their connection with the old country, until, as we shall see, St. Columba set them free from the burden of a double allegiance, and they became independent.

This family, of which these three brothers were the chief representatives, was a wild and restless one, and as their story is intimately connected with the history of Ireland, we will spend a little time in considering it, along with that of their cousin, Murchertach (Murtough) mac Erca, who is dignified by the title of "The Hector of the O'Neills," who about the same time became king of Ireland. There are strange stories told of the whole family, and especially of Murtough himself, whose life and death seem to have been equally fierce and savage. Murtough was great-grandson of Niall of the Nine Hostages. He belonged to the Cinel Eoghan (Owen), and his mother, Erc, from whom, after a fashion common among the Scots and Picts, he was named Murchertach mac Erca, was a daughter of Loarn. She had been formerly married to another prince, but had eloped with Murtough's father, and bore him four sons, of whom Murtough was the eldest. These children had also step-brothers, two of whom, Bishops Dallan

and Cairnech, are very much mixed up in the stories of Murtough's life. Cairnech and Murtough supported each other, but the others were in perpetual strife.

Murtough, who was chief of the Cinel Eoghan of Donegal, and King of Aileach its capital, spent his youth partly in Alba and partly in Britain. His hands were early stained with blood; he was expelled from Alba (Scotland) for murdering his grandfather, Loarn, and from Ireland for other acts of cruelty; at the instigation of Cairnech, he also murdered one of his step-brothers, and married his widow, having previously run off with a daughter of the king of France. There is no end to the evil deeds ascribed to him. Nevertheless, in 512 A.D. (Ann. Ulst.) he ascended the throne of Ireland, and his reign from this out is one succession of wars, chiefly directed against Leinster and Connaught, in which he was usually successful. His death is as savage and tragic as his life. According to the romantic tale which relates it, it happened on this wise.

There was a witch-woman whose name was "Storm and Rough-wind, Winter-night, Sigh and Croan." Though outwardly she was star-bright and beautiful, inwardly she was cruel as her names. She hated Murchertach, and determined to destroy him. One day she decked herself in her best, and lay in wait for the king as he went to hunt near the house of Cleiteach (Cletty), the kingly palace built by Cormac mac Airt on the banks of the swelling, salmonful Boyne. She ap-

peared so fair, that the king went up to her, and after he had talked to her awhile, he was ready to promise her anything in life she wished.

"My wish," she said, "is that you never mention my name, and that you take me to your house, and that while I am there neither your wife nor any cleric be allowed to enter the house of Cleiteach." "It were easier for me to give you half Ireland than the things you have asked," said the king; but nevertheless, he was so fascinated by her that he brought her home with him, and drove his wife* and the clerics out of the house and drove out also his followers of the clan of Niall. Bishop Cairnech was in the house at the time, and when he saw what was being done, he took charge of Murtough's wife, and stirred up the clans of Eoghan and Conall, to come and turn out the witch-woman; but none of them could find a way into the house. Then Cairnech was so angry, that he cursed the place, and he dug a grave for the king before the house, and prophecied his downfall. Yet it was he who, when Murtough was still a youth, had told him that he should be king of Tara.

When all were gone, the witch-woman set herself to work spells on Murtough, so that he knew not whether he were in his right mind or no. She gave him magic meat which, when he had eaten, all his strength went from him; and drink, which sent him into uneasy

* This was still another wife, a daughter of a King of Connaught.

slumbers. And she made out of ferns and stones and puff-balls the semblance of great hosts surrounding the house, so that the king rushed madly out upon them to scatter them, and all his strength was lost in fighting with phantoms.* But for all that, the woman was so lovely, that he would not suspect her, but believed everything she said. The clerics came again and tried to entice the king away from her, but she threw her spell over him, so that he could not break away. Then when he was weak and faint and had no power left, she cast a sleep upon him, and she went round the house, putting everything in readiness. She called up hosts of magic warriors, and placed them round the fortress, with their spears and javelins pointed towards the house, so that the king would not dare to go out among them, and then she scattered fire-brands and flung lighted torches everywhere through the house. When she saw that it was set on fire, she returned to the room where the king lay. Suddenly he awoke from sleep, for he heard the crash of the falling timbers, and the noise of the magic hosts, and he smelled the strong smell of fire in the house. He sprang up. "It seems to me," he cried, "that hosts of demons are around the house, and that they are slaughtering my people, and that the house is set on fire." "It was but a dream," the witch-maiden

* Comp "The Great Defeat of Magh Muirthemne," *Cuchulain Saga*, Hull; and "Battle of Kat Godeu," in Skene's *Four Ancient Books of Wales.*

said. Yet, for all that, he arose swiftly and sought his arms; but when he saw the magic hosts about the house, he made one plunge forward into the midst of them, and then he turned into the house again. But as he turned, the flames leaped out, and all the doorway and the roof and the interior of the dwelling was one sheet of flame. He saw no way of escape, save the vat of wine that stood in the banqueting-hall, and into that he got, but the burning timber fell upon his head, and he fell back into the wine, and so was drowned. Thus ended Murtough, and the clerics buried him when they found his body next day; and it was they that wrote this account of him, as Cairnech related it. But Rough-wind, Storm and Winter-night, Sigh and Groan did not die in the burning, for she had magic power, but she died soon after, of grief for the man she had killed. But before her death she believed in the teaching of the clerics and did penance for her sins.

That there is a germ of truth in this wild fable we need not doubt, for the annalists record the death of Murtough by a woman in the house of Cletty, and Tighernach even gives the outline of the tale as preserved in the old poem and myth. But it is evident that in the mind of the cleric who wrote the tale, the story has assumed the aspect of a parable, to describe the struggle that was then taking place in Ireland between the old and the new faith. The hold of the pagan beliefs were still strong upon the people; they fascinated

them as "Rough-wind" fascinated Murtough, and it was the desire of the clerics to impress upon their adherents that such beliefs would end in ill. When therefore the witch-woman is made in the tale to repent of her deeds, and become a Christian before her death, it is doubtless intended to shadow forth the slow extinction of paganism before Christianity.

The legend itself is the last pure fairy story belonging to the lives of the Kings of Erin; and it is curious to find it coming so late in the history. It can only be explained on the ground of its allegorical significance.

In studying the Life of St. Columcille we shall come again on the history of the colony founded by Loarn and Fergus in Scottish Dalriada, or "Scotland," as it soon began to be called. It is Murchertach (Murtough) mac Erca who is said to have carried over the Lia Fail, to crown the Scottish kings upon, but the story is so unlikely that we may dismiss it as a fable. In Murtough's day the colony was of little importance, it did not even become independent for many years after his death, and no one at that time could foretell that it would ultimately give its princes to the whole country. Moreover, the last thing an Irish king would have been likely to part with was the symbol of his authority, and that of his ancestors and successors; even so careless and wild a prince as Murtough would hardly have ventured on this step, and his love for his relations in Scottish Dalriada was not so great as to make him particularly

anxious to secure their succession. You will remember that he had murdered Loarn with his own hand.

Murtough was succeeded by Tuathal Mael-garb (Toole "the bald rough one"), so called because his mother, to fulfil some superstitious ceremony, had struck his head against a stone after his birth, which had made a hollow place on his head on which the hair would not grow. Perhaps it also effected his brain, for he does not seem to have been a remarkable king in any way. He was also of the race of Niall, and cousin to Murtough.

The chief event of his reign was the Battle of Sligo, fought in 537 A.D. between the provinces of Ulster and Connaught. To judge by the songs made about it, this must have been a furious fight. "The River Sligo," one poet cries, "carried down to the great sea the blood and flesh of men. With fury of sword-edges the battle was fought over the border. The kine of the foemen bellowed against the spears, and over the head of Eogan Bél pæans were sung." *

The cause of this battle was a revival of the old jealousy between the descendants of Dathi and those of Niall. Eogan Bél, King of Connaught, was son of Oilioll Molt. He ruled over the patrimony given to his ancestors by Niall, but being an ambitious king, he so extended his power in a series of successful wars, that both Leinster and Munster were obliged to court his

* Annals of Tighernach, K. iiii.

favour. But it was with his old enemies of Ulster that he most wished to square accounts, and we hear that never a quarter of a year passed, but he raided in their borders. At length, grown impatient of this sort of insolence, the whole of Ulster united its forces to put an end to it. The two sons of Murtough, Fergus and Donall, now ruled in Ulster, and they began a series of reprisals. In spite of all that the Connaught-men could do, they ravaged the Northern districts, driving off great preys. At a bridge over the Sligo River, the main body of Eogan's troops caught them up; but seeing that the enemy was strong, Eogan proposed to treat. In the moment of their triumph, the men of Ulster were not inclined to treat, and they contemptuously refused the terms offered through Eogan's bards, as was indeed likely, seeing that he demanded back all the spoils they had secured, by way of preliminary. On receiving the reply, Connaught charged upon the Clan-Niall. At sight of Eogan's standard and the banners of the septs that so many a time had taken their preys, Ulster turned, either side in hate quivering to reach the other, and the Battle of Sligo was delivered. The North of Ireland was defeated,* but the King of Connaught was mortally wounded and was borne from the battle on the spear-shafts of his

* Some accounts say that both the sons of Muirchertach were slain, but as we find them occupying the Throne of Tara soon after, this is a mistake.

men. For three days he lingered, suffering many things at the hands of unskilful surgeons, but they could do nothing for him; and it was only left to him to prescribe the succession to the kingdom, and the manner of his burial. Like Laery, he desired to be buried standing, in the open field on the borders of his country, with his red spear in his hand, and his face towards the North; "for," said he, "so long as my grave shall confront Ulster, I also having my face turned towards them, they will never venture against Connaught, or successfully wage war against us." The command was carried out, and seems to have answered the purpose for which it was intended, for defeat pursued the clans of the North in all their future raids. At length they determined to put a stop to the ill omen. They gathered a great host, fell upon and opened the grave of Eogan, and carried his body across the river northward to the flat land of Loch Gill, burying it there with the face downwards. So their ill-luck was turned.*

The peace of Tuathal was broken by fears of a rival to the throne. The existence of Dermot mac Cearbhal, a Prince of the same race, seemed to him a perpetual menace, and he was not satisfied until he had driven

* See the story entitled "St. Cellach of Killala," *Silva Gadelica*, Vol. I., pp. 49-51; Vol. II., pp. 50-52. The whole of this story is most instructive for the light it throws upon the relations of Church and State in Christian Ireland.

Dermot into exile with a heavy price set upon his head, or rather his heart, which was to be brought to the king in token of his death. Dermot fled to the west of Ireland and wandered about in desolate places with a few followers. It was while he was one day roaming about the banks of the Shannon, that he came by chance across St. Ciaran, who was planting the first poles of his church at Clonmacnois. Dermot's curiosity was aroused, and he went to the Saint and asked him and his companions what they were doing. "Building a little church," was the reply. Dermot, being of a vigorous and kindly disposition, stopped to help plant the pole, and while he and Ciaran were together thrusting one of the uprights into the earth the young Prince, in token of reverence, took St. Ciaran's hand and placed his own hand over it; whereon the Saint, touched by the humility of the youth, earnestly besought God to give the kingdom to Dermot by that time to-morrow. "How could that be?" said Dermot, "seeing that Tuathal rules over Ireland and I am an exile?" "That is a matter for God," replied the Saint. The tutor of the Prince, named Maelmor, who had accompanied him in his flight, heard this conversation, and determined that he would himself bring this thing to pass. He slew a whelp, and taking out its heart, he placed it on the point of a spear, and so entered the royal palace. As the king stooped to receive the heart, thinking it to be Dermot's, Maelmor thrust him through

with the spear. Maelmor was instantly cut to pieces, but Dermot presented himself at Tara, and was accepted as king. In return for his assistance, Dermot bestowed on Ciaran lands and churches, and in every way assisted him.

CHAPTER III.

DERMOT MAC CEARBHAL AND THE FALL OF TARA (ABOUT 538-564 A.D.).

Authorities: "The Four Masters," and the Annals of Clonmacnoise; pieces called "A Story of Aedh Baclamh," and "The Death of King Dermot," Edited by Standish Hayes O'Grady in *Silva Gadelica*; Life of St. Ciaran of Clonmacnoise, in the Book of Lismore Lives, Edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes. Dr. Petrie's "Tara" gives many extracts from Irish writings bearing on the Subject.

We come now to the reign of one of the most enlightened kings of early Ireland, Diarmaid mac Cearbhal (Dermot mac Karval), great grandson of Niall of the Nine Hostages. At the time he came to the throne, the central authority of Tara had been over-shadowed by the growing strength of the great nobles, who during the reigns of feeble kings, had built strong fortresses all over the country, and were able to defy the authority of the supreme king from behind their impregnable walls. The power of the church, too, was becoming formidable; the chief saints were looked upon by the people as the successors of the Druids, and as possessed of supernatural powers. They became haughty and independent, and refused to submit to the authority of the crown. They, indeed, claimed a power higher than the king, and often interfered to prevent the just execution

of justice. One of the powers exercised by the monks was the "right of sanctuary."* This was a prerogative of mercy which was exercised in those troublous times not only by the monks but by kings and bards also. There were also certain places, such as church-lands and the immediate neighbourhood of the chief's dwelling, which had the "right of sanctuary." That is to say, if a man had killed another by accident or otherwise, he might escape into one of these places for refuge until his cause could be tried and witnesses brought. Otherwise the avenger, who was always a near relative of the slain man, might kill him outright without trial at all. It was not intended that the criminal should escape the consequences of his misdeeds, only that he should have the chance of a fair hearing. But the monks often over-stepped their privileges, by refusing to give up the guilty man at all, and thus they openly defied the law. Twice over, at least, this happened in Dermot's reign; once it was St. Columcille who refused to give up a rebel chieftain who had defied Dermot's authority, once St. Ruadan of Lorrha did so. There seems no doubt at all that the monks did this on purpose to make Dermot understand that they intended to be independent of his authority. Now the counsel and the learning of the monks had often in those ignorant days been of great service to the kingdom and to the chiefs. Most of the chiefs had one brother or

* See *Pagan Ireland*, Epochs of Irish History, I., Chap V..

more in the church, and this brother became the counsellor and trusted adviser of the ruler, who depended almost entirely on his advice in difficulties. The teaching of the monks in regard to the mercy that should be shown to outlaws and others had also been productive of much good in an age when the life of a man was not much taken into account. But the power thus gained by them was not always used for these good purposes; they used it sometimes merely to gain advantages for themselves, and to incite the people to look to them for support against the rightful authority of the crown.

When Dermot, who was a man of large and enlightened ideas, came to the throne, he felt that an end must be put to this state of things if the authority of the crown was to be maintained at all. Between the fierce and disobedient chieftains on the one hand and the powerful and independent monks on the other, the power of Tara was almost at an end. Dermot determined to reassert the central authority over chieftains and saints alike, and to bind the country into one kingdom, looking to Tara as its head. It was a bold and princely idea, but alas! it could not be carried out; for the forces against Dermot proved too strong for him, and instead of reinstating the power of Tara, it was in his reign that Tara fell, never again to be inhabited.

The first matter to which Dermot applied himself was the reduction of the power of the chiefs. Their castles or forts were so strong, and the doors so massive and

narrow, that they could practically defy the authority of the king's messengers. They took especial advantage of the illness of the king's sergeant, whose business it was to represent the king, to strengthen their walls. On his recovery the king issued a decree, which he commanded the sergeant, Baclamh (Backlav), to convey to the chiefs, and to see it carried out. "The king's spear," so ran the decree, "must pass sideways through the doors of the nobles, and such doors as are too narrow to admit this are to be broken down." Baclamh, accompanied by the royal herald to proclaim the king's peace, travelled hither and thither, carrying out the decree. He met with no opposition, until he arrived at the fort of Aedh Guaire,* a chief of the Hy-Many in Connaught, who, in preparation for his wedding, had added a new stockade of red oak round his dwelling, and had rebuilt the house itself before the return of his bride. He had left orders that if Baclamh arrived in his absence, a passage should be made for him in the stockade. He was still away at the wedding-feast when the messengers arrived. They were cordially received and entertained, the door being opened before them. In the middle of a banquet the owner returned. Baclamh gave the king's message, but de-

* This Guaire, son of Colman, must not be confused with Guaire Aidne, "The Hospitable," with whom Keating confounds him. Guaire Aidne lived over half a century after Dermot Mac Cearbhal's death.

manded that the front of the house also should be hewn open to the width of his spear. "Give thine own orders to have it hewn as it pleases thee," replied the infuriated host, but even as he spoke, he dealt a stroke of his sword at the sergeant, and his head rolled on the floor. Dermot, hearing that his authority had been thus defied and his messenger killed, sent out forces to waste the lands of Guaire, and to take the chief or kill him. Guaire fled to Ruadan, Abbot of Lorrha, who was his uncle, and placed himself under his protection, claiming rights of sanctuary. Ruadan, terrified at having an outlaw under his roof, sent him straight off to a Prince of Wales whom he knew, and in whom he reposed great trust. Dermot's envoys followed him there, demanding his return, and threatening, if it were refused, to come over with his forces and destroy the kingdom. The Prince of Wales, much frightened, sent Guaire back to Ruadan; and Dermot, hearing that he had returned, went in person to demand that the rebel should be delivered up.

Now Ruadan of Lorrha, though he was one of the best-known saints of Ireland in his day and had been the companion of St. Columcille and St. Finnian at Clonard, does not appear to have been a very truthful man. We must remember in speaking of the Irish saints that the title was given to any of the Christian community who held any office or prominent position in the church, so that there were among the saints then,

as there are among Christians now, many who were by no means perfect men, and they often said and did things which we all know to have been wrong. St. Ruadan never appears to have been a favorite even among his school-fellows at Clonard, and after he left, he seems to have tried to entice away from St. Finnian's school some of his scholars, so that St. Finnian had to expostulate with him. He does not seem to have been at all an upright or likeable man, and the story we have now to tell of him is not to his credit. When the king was on his way to Lorrha, Ruadan took Guaire and hid him in a hole in the floor, of which no one knew but himself and his servant. The king entered and demanded from Ruadan, in no very courteous terms, that he should deliver up the outlaw. "It did not," he said, "belong to one of Ruadan's profession to hide a man who had defied the king's authority and slain his messenger." After some conversation, Dermot asked where Guaire was. "I know not," said the Abbot, prevaricating, "unless he be where you stand." The king, thinking he was jesting, and not believing, the story says, that Ruadan could tell a lie, went off in high anger; but as he went along, thinking of Ruadan's words, it struck him that there might have been something behind them, and turning back, he arrived just in time to catch sight of the servant descending into the hole with a candle. Thus certain of his prey, the king sent and fetched up the rebel and bore him off to Tara.

Then Ruadan, furious at having got the worst of it, gathered together the chief saints of Ireland, and all the monks that he could muster, and pursued Dermot to Tara.

That night the king dreamed a remarkable dream. He saw a great tree rooted in the earth, and so high and broad that it came near the clouds of heaven. A hundred and fifty men with a hundred and fifty broad-mouthed sharp axes stood about the tree, hewing it; and when it was cut, it fell to the earth with so great a noise that the king was awakened out of his sleep. The great tree cut down on Tara's green was the High-Monarchy of Tara, the hundred and fifty woodmen were the prelates and monks of Erin hewing down the monarchy by chanting the hundred and fifty psalms of David. The harp that hung on the walls of Tara, sounding the glories of the central monarchy, was destined to fall, never to be restored again; and it is across the annals of this enlightened monarch that the melancholy entry runs: "The last Feis of Tara was held by Dermot mac Cearbhal.' Then, according to the old story, for a whole year a singular sight, never witnessed anywhere but in ancient Ireland, took place. It was one of the most curious of all the customs of early Ireland, that when the bards or Druids wanted anything which they were not powerful enough to take by force, they stayed outside the door of their enemy, eating no food

until they got what they wanted. They expected the sight of their sufferings to move the inhabitant to pity. The early saints adopted this custom from the bards, and for a whole year, the entire body of the chief saints, assembled before Tara, "fasted upon" Dermot, as this strange habit was called.* They stayed patiently through wind and rain and in deep snow, in tents, on the lawn before Tara, and every second night they passed without tasting food, and all the time they rang their bells, and sang their psalms and cursed the king and Tara. But the king was not to be beaten; he too could fast, and on the alternate nights to those on which the monks fasted, he fasted against them. He closed the doors of Tara, so that they might not enter, and he tried by ruses to get them to break their fast first, in which case it seems that he would have won the day. But it was Dermot who at last broke his fast, for one night when he thought that he had got the monks to eat, he ventured to eat himself, and finding that he was mistaken, he knew that he must give way. So after joining the monks in the morning Psalms, the king entered their dwelling, and addressed them in dignified and weighty words. "Alas!" he said to them, "this is an iniquitous war that ye have waged against me, seeing that it is Ireland's good that I seek after, to preserve her discipline and royal right;

* For an explanation of this curious custom, see *Pagan Ireland*, Epochs of Irish History, I., Chap, VI., p. 62.

but ye seek her disorder and ruin. For the Order of a Prince is conferred on such and such an one by God Himself, to the end that he shall by righteous rule and equitable judgment, maintain his truthfulness, his princely quality, his place of governance. Now that to which a king is bound is to show mercy joined to stringent execution of justice; to maintain peace in the tribal limits, to hold hostages in bonds; to succour the wretched, but to overwhelm enemies; and to banish falsehood from his realm. For unless on this hither side of death the King of Heaven's will be done, no excuse will be accepted for us yonder. And thou, Ruadan, through thee it is that injury and rending of my sway has come about, and it is thou who hast taken from me my uprightness of purpose towards God: I pray God therefore that thy diocese be the first in Ireland to be given up, and thy church lands destroyed." "Rather," said Ruadan, "may the dynasty come to nought, and may no lineal descendant of thine establish himself upon the throne of Tara."

It is sad to reflect that it was upon a monarch with so noble an ideal of his kingly duties as this, that the opposition of the monks fell. But desire of power had made them ready to sacrifice the well-being of their country to the advance of the church, and the good of the nation was less to them than their own possession of power. Dermot was constantly in collision with Columcille on similar

points, and these quarrels so weakened his kingdom, that though he reigned for some time still, his influence and rule were at an end. A dream came to him once of two men, a layman and a cleric, dividing his diadem and taking each a piece of it, and the dream was, in fact, true, for the church had established its right to interfere in matters of state, and those powers which had originally been given to the monks by courtesy, in acknowledgment of help and sound advice, they now came to regard as their right. The great palace of the Tara kings, established in the mythical period of Slainge, first monarch of the Firbolg, and beautified and renovated by Cormac mac Airt and his successors, was abandoned. Henceforth the kings chose each his own residence wherever it pleased him within his own territory; and the sound policy of a strong central authority, for which Dermot had struggled so bravely, had to be abandoned. Had his wise and far-seeing purpose been carried out, Ireland might in later days have opposed a united front against the common foe, the Norsemen, who swept away church and state alike.

The death of Dermot is as sad as was all his life. He was making a royal circuit of his dominions, when he was invited by a warrior to his house at Rathbeg. While he was feasting there, he chanced to look upward to the roof-tree, and he noticed that it was not new, like the other parts of the house. Now Ruadan had prophesied when he cursed Tara that the ridge-

beam of Tara's royal roof should be broken down, and cast into the sea, and that by that roof-beam Dermot should meet his death. So he said to the warrior, "Methinks that thy roof-beam is old, though thy house is new." "We took it from the sea," said the warrior, "once upon a time that we went out in our currachs to fish. The ridge-beam floated towards us on the water, and for the curiosity of the thing, I had a house built with it." "Truthful was the prophecy," cried the king, and he sprang towards the door to get out. But Black Aedh, an enemy of his, whom he had outlawed to Scotland, entered at the doorway. "This is the way!" he cried to Dermot, thrusting him through the breast with his spear. Then the King tried to turn again into the house; but his foes, the men of Ulster, who had fought against him in the Battle of Culdremhne (Culdrevne), surrounded the house, and set fire to it. Dermot sought to take refuge in the ale-vat from the flames, but the roof caught fire, and the roof-tree fell on him, so that he died. Thus perished the king, all of him being consumed except the head, which was reverently carried to St. Ciaran's church at Clonmacnois, which he had helped to found, and where he had desired to be laid. For when he was ill with a head-sickness, after the fasting of the saints against him, it was in the "Little Church" of Clonmacnois that he had taken refuge, to be cured and tended.

Once Dermot had asked his bard what should be the

fate of the kingdom after he had passed away. It was a sorrowful reply that the bard gave him :—"An evil time," he said, "is now at hand; men shall be in bondage, women free; the woods hewn down, the produce scanty; wicked chiefs ruling in the land, and vassals in rebellion; broken pledges and constant wars."

No doubt we may accept the accounts of Dermot's reign as partly mythical, and certainly they have been coloured by the writers; yet here again, the main facts seem true, and it is one of the most serious of Keating's many omissions in his history, that he never even alludes to an event of so much significance as the fall of Tara, or the causes that brought it about.

It was in the reign of Dermot mac Cearbhal that St. Columcille, St. Finnian, St. Ciaran and many others of the chief saints of Ireland lived and carried on their work. To understand the history of the time, their lives should be read side by side with the secular history.*

*See Chaps XII., XIV., &c.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOROMHE, OR THE LEINSTER TRIBUTE AGAIN

Authorities:—Adamnan's Life of St. Columba, Edited by Dr. Reeves; Annals of Tighernach; Annals of The Four Masters; Tale entitled "The Boromhe," Edited by Standish H. O'Grady, *Silva Gad.*, Vol. I., pp. 370-381; Vol. II., pp. 408-418.

FERGUS and Donall, the two sons of Murchertach mac Erca, succeeded to the throne. Their joint reigns, and those of their immediate successors, are unimportant. Ireland was twice afflicted about this time with the terrible plague which swept over western Europe, and extended itself to Ireland. These visitations occurred about the years 543 and 562, and there was another outbreak, equally severe, a hundred years later. It was called the "Great Death" or "Yellow Plague," and it decimated both Britain and Ireland. St. Finnian of Clonard died of it, and the school of St. Mobi, at Glasnevin, which St. Columcille attended in his youth, had to be closed on account of it (see chap. xii.).

The reign of Aedh, son of Ainmiri, who came to the throne in 568 A.D. is memorable for the great Council of Drumceat, which was held in his reign, and for which St. Columcille came over from Scotland with the Prince of Scottish Dalriada, Aedan, to plead the cause of the Scottish colony. The moment was a favorable

one, for Aedh, King of Ireland, belonged to the same house, and he, Columcille and Prince Aedan were all closely related. Three important questions occupied the attention of the Council. The independence of Dalriada was one, the suppression of the bards another, and the third was the question of deposing or reinstating Scannlan, Prince of Ossory, who had refused to pay a head-rent to Aedh, and was at that moment kept imprisoned by him till the case should be decided. The Convention was held at a place called to-day Roe Park, in Derry, within the patrimonial territory of King Aedh.

The saint was not well received on his appearance at the Convention; the king was aware that he came to espouse the opposite side to himself on all three questions under discussion, nor had he forgotten the disputes between Columcille and his predecessor. Only one prince of the royal house rose up to greet the abbot with his train of clerics; the others, by command of the king and queen, treated him with marked rudeness. Nevertheless, he was successful in the matters for which he came to plead. The monarch of Ireland relinquished for ever the right of the kings of Ireland to tributes from Dalriada, though he still required from them military service in time of war; and Scannlan, Prince of Ossory, was set free.* The question of the position of the Filéadh or bards was the subject of lengthened dis-

* For the story of Scannlan, see *Pagan Ireland*, Epochs of Irish History, I., Chap. V., p. 51.

cussion; the king was anxious to banish them altogether from Ireland, their insolence and exactions having grown insupportable; but through the intercession of St. Columcille, they were spared, though with a severe curtailment of their privileges and honours. Their numbers were reduced to one Filé or Ard-Ollamh (Ollav) to be maintained by the king, and one by each chieftain of a district or province; their retinues were cut off, and their awards regulated by law. In gratitude for his intervention in their favour, the chief poet of Ireland, Dallan Forgall, to whom it fell to carry out these regulations, wrote a poem in praise of St. Columcille, called the "Ambra Coluimcille." This poem still exists, but is extremely difficult to read.

King Aedh had in his family a young son, whose evil behaviour and licentiousness made him dreaded in Ireland. It was his custom to go from place to place quartering his soldiers upon the people and everywhere bringing misery upon the chiefs and inhabitants, who dared not refuse him his unlawful desires. His evil deeds at length brought punishment, for when he was on one of these visits to Brandubh, King of Leinster, he fell into a trap laid for him by the men of Leinster, and was killed. The name of this youthful prodigal was Cumascach. In what seems an excess of honesty, Brandubh sent to tell Aedh that he had slain his son, and slaughtered his followers. Aedh allowed the messengers to depart in safety, but told them that he would

soon follow after to avenge himself on Brandubh. Accordingly he hosted into Leinster, a raid for which any King of Tara was always ready. All the North mustered to the borders of Leinster, before Brandubh had time to make preparations. He sent the Bishop of Glendalough, who was half-brother to Aedh, to entreat a delay till he could get his forces together. So cool a request roused the King's anger. He loaded the Bishop with indignities, and taking him along with him, at once marched southwards. At every point in the way some sharp retort of the Bishop added fuel to the wrath of the King. They reached a pass called the Pass of Dunbolg or the "Fort of the Sacks." "What sacks are those at all?" asked the king of the bishop. "The bags in which are the provisions of your host, which will be left behind them in their flight to-night," was the reply. They passed a great grey flagstone, called the "Flag of Bone-smashing." "What bones now can those be?" asked the king. "The bones that will be broken on it to-night, and thy head that will be struck off on it," said the bishop consolingly. On they went to Berna-na-Sciath, or the "Gap of the Shields." "What shields are they?" asked Aedh. "The shields of the races of the North, of Conall and Eoghan, thy allies, which will lie scattered there to-night," said he.

That night the bishop and Brandubh planned a ruse together by which the camp of Erin might be entered, and their serried ranks broken, for the men of Erin's

standards over the huts were thick like the flight of many-coloured bird-flocks, and beneath them lay the whole strength of the North. A huge candle was made, the largest ever dipped; three hundred teams were prepared, with twelve oxen to each, and in them lay concealed the bravest of the young warriors, overlaid with straw, and above that a layer of victuals, as though there were nothing but meat in the carts. Moreover, thrice fifty wild, unbroken horses were obtained, and bags of rattling stones tied to their tails, so that in their panic, they might set the horses of the enemy flying. When all was ready, a spy, dressed as a leper, and with a wooden leg, made his way to the King of Ireland's tent. "Whence do you come?" asked the monarch. "I was in the territory of Leinster," said the spy, "and while I was absent from my hut, the men of Leinster came and destroyed it and my oratory, and carried off my spade and quern." "I will give you compensation," said the king, "but tell me, what do the men of Leinster now?"

"Out of fear of your great host, they are sending you the Tribute," was the reply; "and never will you have better or more plenteous victual than they are preparing for you this night." "Curse them for that," cried the fighting-men. "I think I see a pair of warrior's eyes in that leper's head," said the king suspiciously. "If you are frightened at my eyes," said he, "I think little of your chance of keeping Ireland's sovereignty."

The king was indeed fearful, and for this cause especially. When he had met St. Columcille at the Convention of Drumceat, he had asked him, "How many kings, O cleric, from among those thou thyself hast known, will win to Heaven?" "I know for certain of only three," said Columcille, "namely, a king of Oriel, a king of Connaught, and a king of Ossory." "And about myself," said Aedh, "am I not to have the Lord's peace?" "No, not on any account whatever," said the Abbot. "Then at least procure me," said the king, "that while I am alive Leinster shall not triumph over me." "That I cannot do, for my mother was of Leinster, and they besought me on that account that never should they be defeated by a king from without," was the reply; "but here is my cowl, and so long as this is on thee, thou thyself never shalt be slain." When he was marching to Leinster Aedh had sent for the cowl, but his boy replied, "Alas, the cowl was left behind at Aileach (in Co. Donegal)." "Then it is probable that I shall fall to-night," said Aedh.

At this moment the wains came into the camp, the great candle borne before them. In the gloom of night the men of Oriel, who kept the guard, heard the straining of the teams, with the snorting of horses and puffing of the oxen under the wains. Oriel sprang up and stood to arms, challenging, "Who goes there?" "The serving-men of Leinster, with the king of Ireland's provision." The soldiers drew near and poked their

hands under the covers, but they felt nothing but beef or pork. "'Tis true for them," they said, "let them pass on; and let us too go on with them, that in serving out the victuals we may not be forgotten." "What light is that we see?" asked Aedh. "It is the food that is come," replied the leper; and he flung from him his wooden leg, and his hand stole to his sword.

At this moment a fearful din arose. The horses were turned loose, and being frenzied with fear, stampeded, breaking down the huts and tents, and turning the camp into confusion. Like a surging flood leaping against the cliffs, with a great shout the warriors arose, their sword-hilts in their clasp, fully armed for battle. "Who be these?" cried the men of Conall and Eoghan, and grimly the leper replied, "These be the serving-men to serve out to you the viands." "There is no lack of them," cry the rest. Then they formed a circle round the king, and got him on his horse, and bade him fly. But the leper was before him, and three times he tried to intercept him and drag him from his horse, until at length on the "flag-stone of bone-smashing" he hewed off his head. Then he turned, and met the men of Leinster driving the men of Erin northward and making a red slaughter of them, and he laid the gory head of Aedh before Brandubh. This battle was called the Battle of Dunbolg.*

* This tale will recall to everyone the ruse employed by the Greeks to obtain an entrance into Troy,

There is little of interest in the following reigns. Aedh, son of Ainmiri, was succeeded by Aedh Slaine, a son of Dermot mac Cearbhal, by one of his numerous wives, in partnership with Colman Rimidh, a son of Murchertach mac Erca (600 A.D.). During the past forty years many of the earlier saints had passed away. Between 560 and 600 St. Finnian, St. Molaise of Devenish, St. Columcille, St Comgall of Bangor had all died, and their monasteries had devolved upon less famous abbots. St. Kevin of Glendalough was still alive, but he died seventeen years later, the year in which St. Adamnan, the last of the great saints of Ireland, was born. In the "Life of St. Columba," which St. Adamnan wrote many years afterwards, many of the events of these reigns are mentioned; they occurred in his own life-time, and it was natural that he should refer to them in so important a work. Among these is the Battle of Dun Ceithern, fought in the North of Ireland between the then King of Ireland, Domhnall (Donnell) son of Aedh, son of Anmiri, and his foster-son, Congal Claen. This Donnell had been set on the throne by the help of Congal, who undertook to murder the king then reigning, and to make Donnell sole monarch, on condition that he would in return give or restore to him the whole territory of Ulster. Suibhne (Sweeny) Menn, the former monarch of Erin, was a usurper, who had raised himself to power by a succession of deeds of violence, incited thereto by the ambi-

tion of his wife.* Congal Claen "the Squint-eyed" killed Suibhne, and placed Donnell on the throne, but he did not receive from him all the reward he had expected. Donnell contented himself with making him chief of eastern Ulster, or Ulad, reserving the Clan Conall and Clan Eoghan, his own patrimony, to himself. It is probable that Congal, who was a weak and vain-glorious youth, exaggerated the promises of Donnell. At all events it seems to have been admitted by Congal himself that Donnell was a good and just king, and Donnell's affection for his troublesome foster-son is most touchingly shown in the account of the Battle of Magh-Rath (Moira), which we have now to relate. He probably considered that Congal would not have been a wise or acceptable chief for these fighting tribes, and that disturbances would ensue.

Congal was defeated at Dun Ceithern, but instead of accepting his defeat, his shallow nature was the more enraged, and he collected troops from Britain and Scotland to aid him in a struggle against Donnell. This battle is related in a long heroic prose piece, from which we will take the account of it.

* See Fragmentary Annals, *Silva Gadelica*, vol. i., p. 390; vol. ii., p. 424.

CHAPTER V.

DONNELL, SON OF AEDH, AND THE BATTLE OF MAGH RATH (MOIRA), 628-642 A.D.

Authorities: The piece entitled "The Battle of Magh Rath," Edited by Dr. O'Donovan for the Irish Archæological Society, 1842.

You will remember that after the fall of Tara the kings of Ireland chose their own places of residence, wherever their fancy fell. King Donnell, son of Aedh, fixed his palace at a place called Dun na n-Gadh (Dunagoe) on the bank of the Boyne, and there he built a dwelling as like as he could make it to the old palace of Tara in the days of Cormac mac Airt. He dreamed one night that a greyhound which he had reared with his own hand departed from him, and in rage and fury gathered together the hounds of France, Britain and Alba (Scotland), who for seven days gave him battle; but on the last day the hound was killed. He went to enquire from his brother, who was a hermit, what his dream might mean. "It means," was his reply, "that one of your own foster-sons will rebel against you, but in the last of seven battles he will be slain." The hermit counselled the king to detain his foster-sons for a year in fetters, till he should find out whether they were faithful to him or not. "Never would I do so," said

Donnell, " rather than that would I quit the kingdom; for if every man in the wide world should conspire against me, Congal Claen would not."

But he was mistaken in his confidence, for Congal brooded on the wrongs that he thought the king had done him, in refusing him the Clans of Eoghan and Conall, after he had accompanied Donnell into exile in Alba, and helped to place him on the throne of Erin. He meditated on this, till he was filled with anger, and ready to injure Donnell in any way he could.

He was called Congal Claen, or the " Squint-eyed," because as a little boy he had been stung in the eye by bees of the garden, which had swarmed in the heat of the sun, and settled on him, and had injured his eye, so that it never was straight afterwards.

Though these things were always rankling in his mind, it was a little thing that caused the outbreak in the end. He had been invited with his followers to the banquet in which Donnell celebrated his accession to the throne of Erin, and it chanced during the course of the banquet that each guest was served with a goose-egg placed on a silver dish, but by an accident, only a hen-egg on a wooden platter was served to Congal. By an oversight, too, for it was not intended by Donnell, Congal Claen was placed below the seat in which the princes of Ulad were wont to sit, namely, on the right hand of the king. When the monarch of Ireland was of the Southern branch of the O'Neills, the King of

Connaught sat at his right hand, but when he came of the Northern stock, then the King of Ulster would have the place of honour; but at this feast the order was changed. The men of Ulster observed this, and they declared that it was not honourable for them to eat with the king after he had put such an indignity upon their chief. Congal also was so filled with fury and madness that he could no longer distinguish friend from foe. He rushed into the presence of the king, and when the steward, who did not recognise the frantic man, would have prevented him, Congal struck him a blow that broke his head. Even the king was filled with dread when he saw such fury upon him. Congal poured out his wrath and challenge to the king, and strode out of the hall, all the men of Ulster following him.

Then Congal betook himself to Alba, and prayed Eochaid Buidhe* (Eochy the Yellow-haired), King of Dalriada, who was his grandfather, to come to his assistance. He consented, and they sent and gathered forces out of Britain and Saxon-land and France, a great host of foreigners, to go with Congal to Ireland. The armies of Congal and the armies of the King of Erin met at Magh Rath (Moira), possibly near a village of that name in Co. Down, in 637 A.D.

* Eochaid Buidhe was son of Aedan, King of Scottish Dalriada in St. Columcille's time. See Adamnan's Life of the Saint, Book I., Chap. ix. Adamnan mentions the Battle of Magh Rath (Bella Roth) in Book III., Chap. v. He was thirteen or fourteen years old when it was fought.

The night before the battle Donnell did not sleep; not that he feared for himself or for his army, for he knew that they would be victorious; but he slept not for the weight of anxiety that was pressing on his mind on account of the danger to his beloved foster-son, Congal, now his enemy, who would, he knew, on that day meet his fate. Nevertheless, in the morning of the great Tuesday of the defeat, he went forth early and he gathered his forces and harangued them with energy, bidding them remember the great deeds of their ancestors and emulate them in valour and in courage. All with one accord shouted in reply, each protesting that his own Province would do as much as any other in Erin to sustain the conflict and to defend the king of Erin. Only the fierce-faced leader of Clan Conall took umbrage at the exhortations of the monarch, for he thought that he should not have exhorted the troops of Ulster, unless he saw weakness or timidity among them. In his quick burst of fury, he poised his black-darting javelin, and flung it at the king; but it struck the golden shield of the king, and glanced off the central boss, and fell to the ground at the monarch's feet. The king smiled at the furious onslaught of the Northerner. "This is an outburst of hereditary fury and Northern madness, O warrior!" he said. "But hast thou not heard the old proverb, "All the better is a host of exhortation, all the better is a fire of being stirred?" Then Conall was ashamed, and said, "Wisely hast thou suppressed my

great fury, O monarch of Erin, for gentle is the choice of thy expression. And true it is that the wise words of monarchs turn away wrath. I am guilty, O royal prince, and will accept the punishment meted out to me, for it is not an unjust revenge but the justice of a king that shall be visited upon me. Ponder then upon thy royal law and pass thy sentence." "I shall pronounce an upright kingly sentence," said Donnell; "as thou hast sought my death, unsparingly and without pity, so will I spare thee without limitation, without forgetfulness, and, in return, my foster-son is to be spared by thee, O Conall." "This is not a great demand to make, O king," said Conall, "that Congal should be spared; therefore I will fetter him and take him prisoner if so I may, but I will not take his life, O King of Erin." And then they set the battle in array.

Now, on the other side, the druids and the clergy warned Congal that he would fall that day, and that his army would be defeated. But as well might his friends have conversed with a rock as with him, for the three Furies had taken up their abode in his breast, the three Evils which tempt every one: the Fury of Evil Thoughts, and the Fury of Defiant Words, and the Fury of Wrong Deeds; and his senses were closed, so that he would not listen to the advice of his friends. The night before the battle, he was lulled to sleep by the soft sounds of the musical pipes, and by the melancholy notes of the strings and tympans struck by the tops,

sides and nails of the minstrels' fingers, who played upon them with exquisite melody. But miserable was this sleep to Congal, as is the sleep which falls upon a man at the approach of death, and he woke not from that restless slumber, until his druid had chanted to him a song of incitement: "O Congal Claen, arise. Thine enemies approach thee. The desire of the hero is early rising; but thou art like a shepherd who sleeps beside his flock, leaving the sheep without a guard. Hast thou not already sufficiently avenged thine injuries, O Congal? Make peace, therefore, with Donnell, and escape the defeat of this day, when thou and the chieftains of Ulster will fall together."

"The words of thine awakening are not pleasant, O druid," said Congal; "but tell me now, who of all my ancestors has escaped from dying at the last? It is profitless to fly from death, for flight never yet saved a wretch; even though I fled from the battle, I must none the less find death elsewhere; and it is better for me to fall fighting with a good king like Donnell, and for the chiefs of Ulster likewise."

"Though death cannot be avoided," said the druid, "yet a battle may be avoided, nor does God desire the slaughter of men"; but Congal heard him not, for he was sending messengers to reconnoitre the battle-array of the Northern chieftains. Now the custom was, when a fight to the death was in prospect, that the soldiers were bound together, two and two, with fetters,

that none of them might singly turn through fear and run away. When the King of Erin saw the messengers coming, he ordered the hosts to shake and rattle the chains that linked their fetters together, and to raise three great terrific shouts of exultation, that dismay might fill the hearts of the messengers, and that they might take tidings of fear to Congal. The hosts did so, and the messenger fled back to Congal, filled with terror and dismay. Then Congal called the druid, and him he sent to reconnoitre, that he might know how the hosts of Erin were disposed, to the end he might array his forces accordingly. But the senses of the druid were bewildered with the stern and fierce appearance of the hosts, what with their tufted moustaches and long beards hanging to their waists, and overhanging eyebrows, and what with the strangeness of their short, gathered vests, and their golden-embroidered cloaks of black sheepskin thrown back over the shoulders of the heroes. And he turned and came into the midst of the army of Congal, and so terrific was his description of the hosts which he had seen, that Congal exclaimed, "May thy body be a feast for wolves, and may ravenous ravens rejoice over thy breast; for thou hast subdued the courage of our heroes, and destroyed their strength by the description thou hast given of the chiefs of Erin and their monarch. However, in these days warriors believe no more in the wild fables and the vain imaginings of old druids and

bards making panegyrics for the sake of reward. If the protection of thy profession did not guard thee, my hand would put an end to thee before the two armies come into collision."

"Leave these unworthy sayings," said the druid, "for not half of the valour and splendour of the army opposing us have I told to you."

Then Donnell, monarch of Erin, unfurled his consecrated satin banner, and drew his sword, and raised and swung his spear above his head. And the many-coloured banners of the chieftains were unfurled about him. With flushing face and sparkling eye the monarch led on his hosts; and it seemed as though the earth shook beneath the tread of them.

But Congal Claen, fearing that his troops were grown timorous, and might fly in the moment of danger, determined on a hateful plan to test their courage. He made every Ulsterman and every foreigner enter his tent alone, one by one; and at one side of the door of the tent he placed a fierce and terrible man with a black javelin in his hand, ready to thrust; and at the other side a furious hound, with a strong iron collar on him, and a sturdy boy to hold or incite him. When the warrior entered the tent, the dog made a spring at him; and the man, at the same moment, attacked him with his spear. If the warrior shrank, or turned to fly, he was taken and fettered to a companion that he might not run away in battle; but if he showed no fear, he was

left to fight in freedom. But, in fact, none passed the ordeal but Ferdoman the Bloody, who cleft the dog's jaws in twain with his weapon, and then turned his sword upon the man with the lance and slew him. But he stopped not there, for rushing forward into the tent, he made three blows at Congal, to revenge upon him his evil treatment of the Ulstermen and foreigners. He struck down Congal's foster-son and Gair Gann, the counsellor of Congal, who had led him into evil; but Congal himself swerved aside and avoided the blow. Then the battle began in earnest, and Congal recited a warlike speech to stir them on to fight.

Of the conflicts and the horrors of that day, it is impossible here to tell. The wrath of the heroes was like the grasp of the wood-cutters hewing down the branches of the forest; and like the rapid strokes of a smith upon an anvil was the smiting down of the troops. None could aid another, for it was all that each could do to hold his own, and in the terrible carnage the dead lay huddled so closely on the ground that even small men and boys could not pass through them.

One young prince, Suibhne (Sweeny) by name, was so overcome by the terror of the conflict, that giddiness came over him, and phantoms of the brain perplexed him, so that he was bereft of his senses, and he fled from the field like a wild animal seeking the shelter of the wilderness. He felt like a salmon caught in a weir or like a bird snared in the narrow prison of a crib. He

ran, therefore, and escaped in the confusion of a shower of hailstones, but he was an imbecile and a lunatic after that. The four sons of Eochy the Yellow-haired, King of Alba, were all cut down, except Donnell Breac, "the Freckled," * who when he was taken prisoner asked to be brought before the King of Erin, and told him proudly that St. Columcille himself had fostered his father, Eochy the Yellow-haired. On account of that Donnell delivered him up to his father, after he had been for a year his prisoner.

The men of Erin did not leave their dead in the hands of their foes, but by marvellous exploits carried them into their own camp, so that the enemy should not have the triumph of their heads as trophies. Many were the mighty deeds done that day, and above all, great was the onslaught of Congal Claen, and his valour, and his strength in single combats. But the manner of his death was a humiliation to him, for as he was making his way through the host to reach the King of Erin, there met him an idiot foster-brother of his, the son of the chief of Orior (Co. Armagh). His name was Cuanna, and he had been, like Congal, a foster-child in the house of King Donnell; but when the king discovered that he was an idiot, he sent him home, for he thought it not becoming for a king to have an idiot for his foster-son. The mother of Cuanna was dead, and on the day of the battle, his step-mother had said

* See Adamnan's Columba, Book III., Chap. v.

to Cuanna, "Go, fetch me a bundle of fire-wood to heat the bath." He went and brought back from the coppice nothing but green wood and twigs and tops of the birch which he found in puddles and marshes, and put them on the fire. "Alas," said the woman, "thy firewood is like thyself, Cuanna, not good for its purpose; for it is not an idiot son thy father and thy foster-father stand in need of to-day, the day of battle; for six days the battle with Congal thy foster-brother has been raging, and it was thy father's turn to fight to-day, and we know not whether he is now alive or dead." "Who will show me the way to Moira?" Cuanna asked. "It is easy enough to find the way," she said, "for the tracks of the hosts are all along it." Straightway, Cuanna set out at a great pace, and the men of Erin saw a lone man in the plain approaching them from the west.

"Why," cried one," it is Cuanna, the fool," and they laughed loudly, and said, "This was worth stopping to look at, indeed." Cuanna came straight on to where the King of Erin was. "Good, my dear Cuanna, wherefore hast thou chosen to-day to come to us?" said the king kindly. "To assist thee, and to overthrow Congal, though he is my foster-brother," said the fool. "Congal slew thy father in battle yesterday," said the king, "so it becomes thee well to take thy place in the battle against him." The lad grew red with anger when he heard that his father was slain. "Give me

weapons," he said, "and I will drive back any hundred men that come against me this day." A great shout of derision went up from the warriors on hearing this; and the lad said angrily, "Had I a sword in my hand, I would pay some of you out for mocking me." "Do not mind them," said the king, "here is the second best javelin I have, which I will give to you." The idiot took the lance and brandished it, and said he would achieve with it a deed that would be pleasing to the king. "Go," said the king, "to the prince of Munster, and he will give thee the weapons of his brother, who was slain in last Wednesday's fight; he also was a foster-brother of thine." So Cuanna went and the prince of Desmond provided him with weapons.

At this moment Congal Claen was forcing his way through the battle, that he might come face to face with the King of Erin, and all the way along which he passed was strewn with the bodies of the slain; for in his fury he prostrated champions, cut down heroes, and overthrew the common soldiers. Suddenly he came where the simple fool Cuanna stood. Congal bade him welcome contemptuously, crying, "It is an heroic muster, indeed, when fools and madmen are sent into battle against me." "It is not the act of a prince nor of a true hero to throw insults in the face of any son of a good man or hero, who is come this day into the battle to aid his people in their great struggle," said the fool. "Be not angry, O Cuanna," said Congal, "for we

know well enough that it was not for fighting or for feats of valour that thou camest here to-day." "That is not the speech of a great chief," said Cuanna, "for why should I not lend my aid to my monarch and my friends in battle? But, however, it is easier to bear thy gibes than to refrain from giving help to my people in the fray."

Then Congal passed on and heeded him not. But Cuanna pressed his foot firmly against the earth, and putting his finger on the cord of his broad-headed spear he made a carefully aimed shot at Congal, and the spear pierced the armour of Congal beyond the angle of his great shield, and entered his body, and passed right through, so that the point was seen at the other side. Then Congal looked round and saw that it was the idiot who had hit him from behind, and it was in his power to slay him on the spot, but he would not soil his sword with an idiot's blood. He laid his weapons on the ground, and made a mighty drag to pull out the spear, but he failed; and again he tried and failed; but the third time it came out, tearing out part of his body with it. Then, with his strong warlike hand, he drew together his belt to close the wound, and lifted his spear and shield from the ground. and he turned to the idiot and said, "Woe is me, Cuanna, that it was thou and not a mighty warrior that sent this shot into me. Had it been Cellach of the many wars that had wounded me, I should not have felt so grieved. Had it been the son

of Suibhne Menn, whom I slew for Donnell's sake, he would but have paid the debt he owed; but to be struck down by an imbecile, who had no quarrel against me, that it is that troubles me." "Every rash man courts his own destruction," replied the fool.

Congal felt the weakness of his wound coming over him, and he recognised that after this one wound there was neither kingship of Erin or of Ulad for him any longer; but he gathered up his strength and the might of his army before he died, and like the flocking together of greedy summer ravens, or the switch of a thresher across the ears of corn, or like the rush of the loud-moaning boisterous sea up a shallow river-mouth, was the onslaught made by Congal and his hosts before his death. There he met the prince of Desmond, who had likewise been fostered with the King of Erin, and he cried, "Wherefore does the large, soft youth of the men of Munster come among us?" "To send thee speedily to thy final destiny among the terrible people of the devil," he replied. Then Congal burst into a clear, tremendous fit of laughter, and he said, "Well do I remember the warlike feats of thy childhood, and the soft slow actions of thy boyhood, for thou wast ever clever at running away, even like thy foster-father Donnell, whose dark mysterious ways and skill at battle-shunning we all know. For the disposition of a foster-child is ever two-thirds that of its rearing and tutorage."

"Thy curses and thy lawlessness bind thee like a mighty fetter, O Congal, and the curses of hundreds greet thee every returning day." Then they flew upon each other, and the sword of Congal was broken and his hand struck off by an upstroke into the air. Congal cried, "It is the cutting of the thread of life to me, that the prince of Desmond should attack me and mutilate me. My sword and my right hand have failed me in battle." Then all the foreigners and the men of Ulster took to flight. In their haste they flung away their arms and coats of mail, and their shields were piled in the middle of the field. They left behind them rich booty, thinking only how they might flee the faster, but the locks and fetters* which Congal had put upon their feet impeded them, so that most of them stumbled and fell, and many others lost their way in making for the woods. And there escaped not of the men of Ulster but six hundred under Ferdoman the Bloody; and of the foreigners one only reached the shore, and he swam home to Scotland with a dead hero fastened to his leg.

* Tolstoi mentions in "The Cossacks," that the Abrecks of the Caucasus, to avoid the temptation of flight, tie themselves together with straps, knee to knee, before a contest in which they are likely to be outnumberd.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF GUAIRE THE HOSPITABLE, PRINCE OF CONNAUGHT (DIED 662 A.D.).

Authorities: Fragmentary Annals, *Silva Gadelica*, Vol. I., pp. 396-401; Vol. II., pp. 431-437. There is another version of the Battle of Carn Conaill, edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes, in *Zeitschrif für Celt. Phil.* III., pp. 203-218. Keating's History; Annals of the Four Masters; Poem entitled "King and Hermit," being a colloquy between Guaire of Aidne and his brother Marban, with Appendices, edited by Dr. Kuno Meyer.

More important than any of the princes who reigned in Tara about this time is a Prince of Connaught, who in his day was known as Guaire the Hospitable on account of his open-handed generosity, and whose name has passed into a proverb. He was chief of Aidne, a district in Galway, and he lived in the reigns of Diarmaid Ruadnaidh, or Dermot "the tender-hearted," and Blathmac, sons of Aedh Slaine, who came to the throne, according to the Four Masters, in 657, but according to Keating, who is probably nearer the truth, in 669 A.D. His name is so familiar in Irish literature that we must turn aside to speak of him. This Guaire has been mixed up with another Guaire who lived in the time of Dermot mac Cearbhall, and apparently reigned over the same district, but whose whole character, as well as the date of his reign, show him to have

been an entirely different person. Of the earlier Guaire we have already heard something in Dermot's reign. It was he who defied Dermot's steward, when he came to exact his submission to the Ard-Righ, and bid him dismantle his fortress; and it was he who in consequence fled to Wales and afterwards took refuge under the safeguard of Ruadan of Lorrha. There are many other stories told of this same Guaire, who was one of the most tyrannical and blood-thirsty princes of his day; of his murder of St. Cellach and of his own son-in-law, Cucongeilt, and of his attempted assassination of St. Ciaran. Though these events happened immediately after the Battle of Sligo, fought, as you will remember, in 537 A.D., Keating, and even some of the annalists, with all the modern writers, have confused him with Guaire the Hospitable, who lived a hundred years later, and whose character was as different as can well be imagined. It is possible that in his earlier years Guaire Aidne may not have been the generous chieftain that he afterwards became; there is a short poem extant ascribing his conversion to St. Columcille, who sang to him a hymn on the virtue of open-handedness. As the Saint had been dead many years before Guaire came into the world, the poem is evidently not genuine, and is perhaps founded on the same misconception that Keating and others fell into. The only unfavourable account of Guaire Aidne that we have, is of his having "lifted" the cow or cows of an old woman, whose

cause Dermot "the tender-hearted" espoused so earnestly, that he raised a host and encamped on the east bank of the Shannon, intending to cross into Guaire's country. A story (differently told by Keating and by the Annalists) says that a saint named Cummine the Tall* was sent to King Dermot by Guaire to ask a truce of twenty-four hours before they met in fight, which was cheerfully and kindly granted by Dermot. The saint, however, followed up his message by rather discourteously commenting on the smallness of Dermot's army, and adding that great as his force might appear to some, those that were arrayed against him made a more gallant show both in point of numbers and equipment. Dermot replied, "Cleric, knowest thou not that neither by numbers nor by brave apparel is a battle won, but by the will of God and a truthful cause; and though thou sayest our host is mean to look upon, it is not fair forms but hardy hearts that win the fight." In truth the victory of Carn Conaill remained with Dermot, and Guaire was routed, and fled away on foot, taking refuge for the night with a female recluse, who, with Guaire's help, caught a salmon in the stream and cooked it for him. She was curious to know who her guest was, but Guaire would not enlighten her beyond saying that he was a man of trust belonging to Guaire, of whose rout he informed her. "Alas, woe is

* Cuimin Fada, or Cummine the tall, was Bishop of Clonfert; he died 661, A.D.

me," she cried, "for the prince that of all in Ireland is first in generosity of alms-giving is now a fugitive flying before his enemies."

Dermot after this raided and harried Connaught, and Guaire at length was forced to render him submission "at the sword's point"; that is to say, he was obliged to kneel before the king, with the point of the king's sword or javelin placed between his teeth. "Now," thought Dermot, "we will learn whether Guaire's well-known almsgiving is done for God's sake, or for vain-glory and popularity. He privately bade a jester, or some say a druid, and also a poor leper of his people to ask somewhat of Guaire. "An alms, O Guaire!" cried the jester jokingly; but Guaire never looked round. Then came the beggar. "Give me an alms, O Guaire!" and Guaire plucked the gold pin from his cloak, and flung it to him, for other valuables had he none. The leper went away, but by Dermot's desire one of his people followed him, and took the pin from him, returning it to the king. The beggar went back and complained to Guaire that he had been robbed of the alms. At his tale Guaire's heart overflowed with pity, and he unbuckled his gold-embroidered belt, and gave it to him, so that he went away the second time. Again Dermot had the girdle taken from him, and again the wretch went back to complain to Guaire. Now Guaire still was prostrate before the king, holding the point of the sword between

his teeth, but at sight of the misery of the leper, great tears rolled down his cheeks. "Are you weeping," quoth Dermot, "because you are lying there in subjection before me?" "I give you my word that it is not for that, but because of yonder beggar that I weep," said Guaire. Then said the king, "Rise up, O Guaire, for never shalt thou be in vassalage to me, seeing that thou art the vassal of one worthier than I, even the King of Heaven and Earth; I claim no superiority over thee; but spare only my mother's people." Then they made friends and were at peace together, and Dermot prayed Guaire to come to him to the great fair of Taillte, in order that he might proclaim him his successor to the throne of Erin.

So in due time Guaire went to Taillte, and with him a sack of silver to distribute to the men of Ireland; but Dermot had enjoined on them all that not one of them, high or low, should dare to ask anything of Guaire during the assembly. He placed Guaire next to himself with all honour, and in this fashion two days passed. On the third day Guaire said to the king:—"Let a bishop be fetched; I would make confession and have unction." "How is this?" said Dermot, alarmed. "Because my death is at hand," said the prince. "What makes you think such a thing?" cried Dermot. "Why, it is easy to guess," said Guaire; "do you not see that here is all Ireland gathered to one place, yet not one poor wretch has asked an alms of me!" "If

that is all," said Dermot, "it can easily be amended"; and he took off his prohibition from the people. "I myself will give thee a sack of silver to dispense." "Not so," said Guaire, "for I brought a store with me." Then he arose and with both hands distributed largesse to all who came. So lavish was his generosity that in the end his people, esteeming it to be excessive, tried to curb him.

It is said that one day, when Guaire was in a church with Cummine the Tall and Caimin of Iniscaltra, each asked the other what he would most desire. "I," said Caimin, "desire that my body be one great sickness, that I may be kept humble"; "and I," said Cummine, "would fain have great store of books, which being well studied by my students, they should then go forth and preach to all mankind." "And I," said Guaire, "would like the full of this church of silver and gold, yet not to hoard up for myself, but to distribute to the poor and lowly of the Lord for my soul's weal." This all came to pass; for Caimin died of a sore disease, while Cummine became a sage and a mighty preacher. So zealous was he in preaching, that he never could hold his peace, and one day he held forth in the very presence of St. Mochuda, Abbot of Lismore, to the people of Mochuda's own monastery, whilst they were working in the field, causing them to forsake Mochuda and follow himself. Mochuda was jealous and cursed Cummine, and he

never had luck after that. But Guaire had wealth as much as he could wish.

In the tenth year of Guaire's reign King Blathmac died of the yellow plague; and soon after King Dermot died of the same disease. He was fighting with the men of Leinster, and falling sick in the battle, he took his stand by a stone cross, erect and with his arms outspread, waiting for the men of Leinster to come up and slay him; but before they reached the place where he was, his soul departed out of him. He was called "Ruadnaidh," which means rueful or tender-hearted, because of his kindness to St. Mochuda, whom the monks of the Southern O'Neill ordered to leave Munster, because the fame of his monastery eclipsed the fame of theirs. He was received by the King of the Deisi, and fixed his abode amongst them, at a place now called Lismore, but then Dun Sginni, which became a seat of piety and learning from this time.

CHAPTER VII.

FINNACHTA THE "FESTIVE," AND THE END OF THE BOROMHA (674-694 A.D.).

Authorities: The piece called "The Tribute," Edited by Standish Hayes O'Grady, in *Silva Gadelica*, and "Fragmentary Annals" in the same work. The story has also been edited from another manuscript by Dr. Whitley Stokes in *Revue Celtique*, Vol. XIII. Bede's Ecclesiastical History devotes some chapters to Adamnan.

THE last King of Tara whose name emerges with any distinctness from the pages of the Annals at the close of the seventh century is Finnachta Fleadhach or "the Festive," who is chiefly remembered because he was the friend of St. Adamnan, one of the successors of St. Columcille in the Abbacy of Hi or Iona, whose life we have given separately. The reign of Finnachta was one of pestilence and misery to the country, and the festivities from which he took his name must have seemed strangely out of place in a land which was decimated by disease and famine. Finnachta had no direct claim on the throne, though he was a connection of the reigning monarch, Cennfaela. He began life as a poor farmer, and his history shows how a man of determination and without too many scruples could in those days rise from a humble position to the highest place in the country. He had at first no possessions, save

his wife and house and one ox and cow. This is the story of his rise.

One cold and wintry night when the tempest was strong and the darkness coming down he heard that the Chief of the men of Ross had lost his way not far from Finnachta's neighbourhood, and being unable to pursue their journey, he and his companions had taken shelter under a tree, intending to remain there till daylight came. Finnachta went out to succour them and brought them into his house, and he killed his only cow and ox to give them victuals. In the morning the wife of the chief said to her husband, "Knowest thou how poor this house is, and yet they have slain their only animals to give us food. Let us therefore make good to them their loss. "It is well," said the Chief, and he bestowed on Finnachta a great herd of cattle and goods besides. And from that time he prospered and grew rich, and he was the fast friend of the Chief of the men of Ross, and they were much together, supporting and helping one another. Together they went to Cennfaela, King of Ireland, who was uncle to Finnachta, and demanded of him that he should give some post of honour to Finnachta, and he bestowed on him the high stewardship of Meath from the Shannon to the sea, and for a while this contented Finnachta. But as his power increased, his ambition waxed greater, till he was no longer content unless he were himself a prince, and one of the first in the kingdom. So he took counsel

with the Chief of Ross, who gave him daring advice: "Win over to yourself the half of Meath that is in the western division, and make it devoted to your cause. Then, when you are well established, pick a quarrel with the other half, and win a battle over them; so may you become, not sovereign of Meath alone, but King of Erin besides." All this in time Finnachta accomplished, for he provoked Cennfaela to a tough battle, and slew him, and he succeeded his uncle on the throne, and reigned for twenty years as High-King of Ireland.

In the chapter on Adamnan you will find much about the friendship of the Saint with Finnachta,* but in the end they quarrelled. The cause of this quarrel was the chief event of Finnachta's reign. It grew out of the old long-standing dispute that was for ever being waged between Tara and the Province of Leinster about the Tribute exacted by the monarchs of Ireland on Leinster. In Finnachta's reign the Tribute (Boromhe) was lost to the Kings of Ireland for ever; though many monarchs endeavoured to revive it, it never was paid again except irregularly and by force.

In the early part of his reign Finnachta had twice carried off the Tribute, but the third time that he endeavoured to enforce it Leinster rose against him and refused his demand. The King of Leinster sent for a Saint named Molling to come to him at his palace of Allen of Leinster, and by various arts he persuaded

* See Chap. xviii.

Molling to go to the King of Erin, who was encamped in the marches of Leinster and Meath with all the hosts of the North around him, to try to persuade him to forego the Tribute.

He sent with him a poet and singer who was to chant before the King of Erin a poem which Molling had made in his honour, as was the custom when a bard or saint came to ask any favour of a chief. They travelled one day in company, but the minstrels who were in the poet's train stirred him up to discontent, saying they liked not that their leader should seem to belong to "a mere clerical company," and to please them the poet replied, "Well, then, let us leave the clergy and get on ahead of them to the encampment of the King of Ireland." This they agreed to do, and they arrived first at the camp, and there the poet recited before the King the poem made by Molling, as if it had been his own.

Next morning, the Saint found that they were gone on before him: not one of the choir of bards and minstrels left. "Just so," he said, "that rhymster has slipped away to the king with my poem, and he will sell it to him before I arrive"; for it was the custom, if a king or chief liked the poem made in his honour, that he would give a large reward for it. They started after the poet, but instead of a welcome, they were received with clods of earth and stones thrown at them by the young men of the King of Ireland's host. When Molling entered the king's tent no welcome met

him; two only of the king's followers rising up to salute them. Molling then began to sing his poem. "Worse and worse we like thee and thy designs," cried the king, "for now thou tellest a lie; that poem was made for us by the bard, and thou sellest it for thy own." "If it be he that made it," said Molling, "let him stand up now and recite it." The bard tried to sing the poem over again, but nothing but nonsense came out of his mouth, and with a wild rush he fled away to the North of Ireland, and was drowned near Assaroe in Donegal. Then the king asked Molling what he desired. "Nought but a respite from the Boromhe until Monday," said the Saint. The king thought this was not a great thing to ask, and he said he would grant that, and Molling made him swear to it by the Trinity and the Four Gospels, and he laid the covenant upon him with many heavy punishments if he kept not his oath. So Molling came back to Leinster, with the remission of the Tribute.

But Adamnan heard the story and what Molling had done. At once he set out to seek the King of Ireland, and he sent his clerk to implore the king to speak with him on an important matter concerning the kingdom. Finnachta the Festive was at that moment playing a game of chess, and he refused to go to Adamnan until he had finished his game. Adamnan was a proud man, and not accustomed to be treated in this manner even by a king; "Go," he said to the messenger, "and

tell the king that while he is finishing his game I will chant fifty psalms, and among them is one psalm which will deprive his children and grandchildren, or even any namesake of his, from inheriting the kingdom for ever." The clerk went back and told the king this, but so absorbed was he in playing the game, that until it was finished he never even noticed him standing there. Then the cleric said, "Come now and speak with Adamnan." "I will not," said Finnachta, "till another game be finished." Then Adamnan, when he heard that, sent the cleric again to say that he would sing another fifty psalms, and among them would be one that would shorten Finnachta's life. This, too, the messenger repeated, but until the game was done the king never noticed him at all. When it was ended, the cleric said, "Come now to Adamnan." "Till a new game be played out, I will not go," said Finnachta. When this message was given to Adamnan: "Go to him," he said, "and tell him that meantime I will sing other fifty psalms, and among them is one which will deprive him of the Lord's peace (*i.e.*, the rest of heaven)." When Finnachta heard that, he thrust the chess-board from him and came hastily to Adamnan.

"Finnachta," said he, "what is the reason that thou comest so readily now, when before thou didst refuse to come?"

"That is easily explained," said Finnachta. "When I was threatened with trouble to my children and my

namesakes, that did not seem to me to matter much The other threat, shortness of life, that too I cared not much about, for Molling had promised me heaven. But the third thing which thou didst threaten, to deprive me of the Lord's peace—that I endured not to hear, so that I am now come in obedience to thy will."

"Is it true," questioned the Saint, "that thou, actually thou, hast remitted the Boromhe until Monday?" "That is true," quoth the king, "I promised the same to Molling a while ago." "Molling hath cleverly tricked thee, then," said he, "for knowest thou not that the word for "Monday" (Dia Luain) means also the "Day of Doom," and it is till Doomsday that thou hast promised to remit the Tribute." And Adamnan made a song on the king, which begins, "This day the withered, grey, and toothless king doth bind his locks with sorrow." When they heard that the men of Erin were furious, and they rose up to pursue Molling, and he fled with all haste across the ford, ringing his bell; and the men of the North came up with him at St. Mullen's cross, where he had sat down to rest and to make a poem against the king, calling down evil upon him and on his descendants. When he saw them coming, he took flight to his own house in Kildare, and a mist coming up covered him, and concealed him from his pursuers, so that he escaped at last. But what with terror and what with the hurry of his flight, his mind was so deranged that he knew not the bell of the

church of Killossy, hard by his own home, neither did he recognise even the great church of Kildare, for he asked a nun, "What is that great town which I see with the church yonder?" "Cleric," said the nun, "terror, I suppose, hath confused thee; knowest thou not the great church of Kildare?" So Molling at last reached in safety his own house in Carlow.

But Finnachta bowed his head and laid it on Adamnan's bosom, and made an act of penance before him, so that of the kingdom of heaven Adamnan deprived him not. But not long afterwards two of his kinsmen entered the tent of the king at night and slew him and his son, striking off their heads on a hurdle.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLOSE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN PERIOD.

Authorities:—Annals of Ulster, &c.; Bede's Ecclesiastical History; Adamnan's Life of St. Columba.

THE period which we have been considering closes in gloom and misery. The country had been decimated by frequent outbreaks of the terrible plague. The Venerable Bede in his Ecclesiastical History tells us that the pestilence depopulated the southern coasts of Britain, and afterwards ravaged Northumbria; thence it passed over to Ireland, where it devastated the land. We have seen that even Kings of Tara were its victims, and many Abbots of Monasteries, as the Abbots of Clonard, Fore, Clonmacnois, and others died of it. About 666-669 four Abbots of Bangor, in Co. Down, succumbed to it in succession. The plague was followed by a great mortality among animals, which lasted three years, and was naturally accompanied by famine.

Moreover, the Saxons were making descents on the East coast, and the Venerable Bede tells us (Book iv., chap. 26) that Egfrid, King of Northumbria, sent his general into Ireland, "and miserably wasted that harmless nation, which had always been most friendly to the English; insomuch as in their hostile rage they spared

not even the churches and monasteries." This descent of the Saxons on the Eastern part of Meath was only a foretaste of the depredations soon to be committed on every part of the country by the Northmen. There is no doubt that the Saxons at this moment, having effected their conquests over the greater part of England, thought to extend them to Ireland; it was the coming of the Northmen to both countries, and the necessity of concentrating all their energies against the new enemy, that turned them from their design. St. Adamnan, the ninth Abbot of Hi or Iona, travelled to the court of Alfrid, King Egfrid's successor on the throne of Northumbria, who was his personal friend and the friend of Ireland, to implore him to release the Irish captives. Sixty of them were set free, and Adamnan conducted them safely home to Ireland.

An extraordinary frost occurred in this year, which is said to have even frozen the sea between Ireland and Scotland ; coming immediately after the mortality of cattle and in the midst of a severe famine, the extreme cold must have added greatly to the sufferings of the unfortunate people.

The kings between the reign of Finnachta the Festive and the first appearance of the Norsemen, which we shall have later to consider, were of no importance, and the history of the time is a mere record of internecine wars, in one of which, in the reign of Aedh Allen, it is said that the Leinstermen were nearly exterminated.

One King, Flaithbheartach (Flaherty), resigned his crown and entered a monastery; only of one is the unusual record made that he died in his bed, a thing so rare that it was thought deserving of special mention.

Nor was the condition of the church more satisfactory. The original heads and founders of the monasteries were all dead, and with them seems to have passed away the reverence in which both they and their foundations had been held. Early in the eighth century began that sacrilegious system of burning the monasteries, which the Northmen copied, but which they did not originate. Later in the same century, before the first chronicle of a Norse descent is recorded, there is not a year in which the destruction of some old foundation through violence and fire by the Irish themselves is not mentioned. For instance, in 774 A.D. Armagh, Kildare, and Glendalough were all burned. In 777 Clonmacnois was burned, in 778 Kildare, in 782 Armagh and Mayo, in 787 Derry, in 788 Clonard and Clonfert, besides numerous smaller monasteries and churches.* The times of the Danes show us no worse record than this. Quarrels and actual conflicts between the monasteries were frequent.† The monks were all armed and obliged to attend warlike expeditions of the chiefs just like other subjects; it was therefore not unnatural that, being trained and obliged to fight, they should often

* (1.) See Annals of Ulster under above dates.

† (2.) Annals of Ulster, 806, 816, &c.

have fought among themselves. They even appeared at church councils fully armed, and some of the councils ended in a fight between opposing parties. It was not until 803 A.D. that the clergy were legally exempted from hostings and wars, and a custom sanctioned by centuries did not even then quickly die out. It was not likely to do so at a period when the frequent descents of the foreigner upon the monasteries made it more than ever necessary that the monks should be prepared to defend their own.

Never had Ireland been in a weaker condition than at the moment the foreign invader first appeared on her shores, never less prepared to resist repeated attacks; no central authority, no strong ruler held the country together. Depressed by famine and pestilence, enfeebled by a succession of inert monarchs, it seemed for the moment as though Ireland were reverting to her original condition of miserable tribal strife, hopeless, aimless and endless. But a great need called out the finer elements in the nation, and it was under the period of Norse incursion that the country rose, under a succession of powerful and purposeful leaders, into the highest position which it ever attained under its native rulers.

In spite of the sufferings under which the country laboured, the later years of the period of Norse supremacy were years of revival, both in religion, art and political importance, while from them comes down a

large body of literature. To reach this state of renewed life, Ireland had to go through a baptism of fire, but there can be no question that, comparing the Ireland of the close of what we have called the early Christian period with the Ireland of the time of the Norman invasion, a great step onward had been taken, if not in the direction of internal peace at least in the direction of external prosperity.

Part II.

The Island of Saints.

PART II.

THE ISLAND OF SAINTS.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. PATRICK'S YOUTH.

Authorities:—St. Patrick's Confession and Epistle to Coroticus. Life of St. Patrick, by Muirchu Mactheni (end of the 7th century) translated by Rev. Albert Barry, C.S.S.R.; Tripartite Life of St. Patrick, 10th or 11th century, edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes.

There is besides an old metrical life of the saint, written by St. Fiacc, some time after the end of the 7th century. This is the only one of the above documents written in Irish.

We must now occupy ourselves with the Church History of this period, from which Ireland has gained the honourable title of the "Island of Saints." We begin with the history of St. Patrick, who is called, and quite rightly, the "Apostle of Ireland."

Now what do we really know about the Apostle of Ireland? It is a most wonderful thing that we still possess, 1600 years after his death, some genuine writings of St. Patrick. They are contained in an old book called the "Book of Armagh," which was once in the Bishop's Library at Armagh, but is now in Trinity College Library, in Dublin. They are written in Latin, but

very poor Latin, for St. Patrick, as he often tells us himself, was not a learned man. The scribe who copied them into the Book of Armagh centuries ago, tells us in one place that the part he had hitherto been copying was written from a manuscript in the Saint's own hand, but that he found it very difficult to read, for it was old and not well written. These two old writings by St. Patrick are called his "Confession" and his "Letter to Coroticus," a British prince. All that we know for certain about the Patron Saint of Ireland is to be learned from these two writings, for though there are many other Lives of him, they were written much later, when people had forgotten about his life; so much so that Muirchu, the first author who tried to tell his story in after times, and who wrote at the request of a bishop in Carlow named Aedh or Hugh, tells us in his preface that he feels as though he were "launching the frail boat of his feeble intellect on a dangerous and deep sea never hitherto explored or sailed upon by any ship," so difficult did he find it to obtain any reliable information to put into his history. If this was true when Muirchu wrote, three hundred years after the time of St. Patrick, it must have been still more true of the later Lives, which are full of stories invented by the writers. You can easily understand that anyone writing the life of a person three or four hundred years after his death, or even later, would have to invent a good deal, if no life had been written in the meantime; therefore none of

these later Lives are to be compared for accuracy with St. Patrick's own writings. Let us see what these interesting writings tell us about the great Saint. The "Confession" was evidently written when he was quite an old man, and it seems to have been put forth to give an account of his labours, and to defend himself against some cruel attacks that his enemies had made upon him and his work. In it he pours out his heart, as only an old man would do, and he points to the great work he had been able to accomplish in Ireland as a seal and testimony to the authority of his mission.

From the Confession we learn the outline of Patrick's career. He tells us that he was born at a place called Bannow of Tabernia, which is supposed to have been near Dumbarton, in a district then called Strathclyde, which had before his time been partly converted to Christianity by St. Ninnian, who had founded a large monastery in Galloway, called Witherne.* His father was of noble birth, and was a "Decurio," that is, a sort of town counsellor in his native place, besides being, as it would appear, a deacon. They owned a country-house outside the town, where the boy used to go at times, and it was during one of these trips to the country that a sad change, which shows us what an unsettled time he lived in, happened to him. Some Irish prince, probably

* Lanigan and others think that the evidence is in favour of Gaul as St. Patrick's birth-place.

Niall of the Nine Hostages, who was carrying on his wars at this time, came down upon the coast; his troops surrounded the house, and carried off the lad, who was then sixteen, with thousands more, as he tells us himself, to Ireland, where the captives became slaves, as was the custom of war in those days. Patrick was a mere lad, a beardless boy, yet he blames himself that even at that early age he had fallen into evil ways, and he says that the captivity was deserved by one who had wandered far away from God. Even the priests, he says, had withdrawn from God and kept not his commandments; and this we know to have been the case, for the inhabitants of Strathclyde, near his old home, who had been Christians, were at this time falling back into heathenism. The place of his slavery is not mentioned by himself, but it was in the North of Ireland, and the later Lives say that his master was a farmer at Slemish, near Ballymena, in Co. Antrim Here he was put to feed swine, and for six years he remained in this menial position. In his loneliness and solitude a great change came over the lad. Here is his own account of this change. He tells us that, while daily herding the animals amongst people who made his captivity heavy and toilsome, the remembrance of the teachings of his childhood came back to him,

" And often in the day saying my prayers,
Daily there more and more did grow in me,

The fear of God. Thus holy fear and faith
Increased in me, that in a single day
I've said as many as a hundred prayers,
And in the night scarce fewer; so that oft
In woods and on the mountain I've remained,
And risen to prayer e'er daylight broke, through snow,
Through frost, through rain, and yet I took no ill,
Then was I swift where now the spirit is slow;
For 'twas the Spirit of God that in me burned."

(*Sir Samuel Ferguson's Trans.*)

Besides this great lesson learned in his captivity, Patrick learned another thing that stood him in good stead in his after mission to Ireland. This was the Irish or Gaelic tongue, in which he afterwards preached to the people; and there is no doubt that one reason of his great success was his familiarity with their own language. His native tongue was British, much like modern Welsh, and he knew a little Latin, although he constantly complains that he was the "most unlearned of all the faithful" and that he had long postponed writing his Confession, because he "feared to fall under the censure of men's tongues." He was not, he said, "well-read as others who had studied law and sacred letters, and who had always used one speech, since he had been obliged to change his speech for another tongue (*i.e.*, Irish), so that it was plain to all in what a rough school he had been brought up." But this new

language became, during the six years of his captivity, so familiar to him, that even when he is writing in Latin he seems to think in Irish, for we find Irish idioms in his Latin phrases. He calls this time of his life the days of his "happy humbling," when he lay "like a stone in the mire of the highway, whom God in His pity came and set upon the wall-top." While the young Patrick was in this frame of mind, and no doubt often turning his thoughts towards home, he heard a voice as he slept one night that said to him, "Thou fastest well; soon thou shalt see thy land and home again." "Behold, thy ship is ready," said the voice.

Watching his opportunity, he escaped from his master, and wandered an immense distance, which he thought must be two hundred miles, to seek the ship. At last he came to a creek in the shore where lay a vessel, and he prayed to be taken on board. The captain answered him with harsh words, "Thou shalt not come with us," and the youth turned from them, to re-enter a hut where he had been lodging. But he tells us that he was praying all the time, and hardly, he says, had he finished his prayer when he heard them calling after him, bidding him come back and make friendship with them any way he chose. So he went with the heathen men and made friends with them, and they set sail, and made a three days' run; but in the end they were either shipwrecked or had for some reason to abandon the boat. They reached land in a desert

place, and for eight and twenty days were wandering about trying to cross the wild country; their food failed, and they were perishing with hunger. They had on board a number of Irish hounds, which were much valued in olden times, and formed an article of trade with Britain and Gaul. The dogs suffered even more than the passengers, for no one could spare them food, and Patrick says with pity that the fine dogs were half-starved, and many were left dead beside the way. At length the captain said, "Well, Christian, you say your God is great; why not pray for us, who perish here of hunger?" Then Patrick preached what may be called his first sermon, for he called on them to repent, and turn to God, to whom nothing was impossible, and who might pity them and send them food. Soon after, a herd of wild swine, which were common in those days, rushed by, and they managed to kill a number of them, so that not only they themselves, but the poor dogs also, had as much as they could eat. St. Patrick seems to have cared very much for the sufferings of the dogs, as all who have gentle hearts must care for the suffering of dumb animals.

The story of his life here becomes a little confused; perhaps it was in this part that the scribe who copied it found it so difficult to read. We cannot tell whether he fell again into bondage, or whether he left the sailors at the end of two months, as he seems in one place to say. However, at last he found himself at home again,

and all his family were rejoiced to greet him once more. I do not suppose they ever expected to see him again alive, and they earnestly besought him, that at length, after so many perils borne, he never more would leave them. For a while he stayed, but fortunately for the Irish, he could not always remain content at home.

Now, the whole life of St. Patrick seems to have been influenced by visions. He felt himself under the special protection and guidance of an invisible companion, or angel, who counselled him in moments of difficulty. This angel he named Victor; and one night he seemed to see Victor coming to him from across the western sea, and bearing in his hand innumerable letters, one of which he gave to Patrick to read. He read but one line, it was "The voices of the Irish," and then he read no more, for it seemed to him that all the air was filled with one strong, pathetic voice, crying to him, "Come, holy youth, and walk amongst us. Come!" The voice was the voice of the Irish by Focluth wood, and it touched him to the heart, and he could read no more, and so awoke. Often did these visions come to Patrick, and he knew not whether they came to him from without, or were the voice of his own soul speaking within him; but at length the day came when he could resist no longer, and he rose up to obey the command Muirchu's Life tells us that he had studied some time with St. Germanus of Auxerre, and received episcopal ordination from a certain Archbishop Amathus; later

writers adopt this and speak also of journeys in Gaul and Italy, but the "Confession" tells us nothing of these journeys, nor much of his future life. The later Lives, perhaps truthfully, say also that on his return to Ireland he landed in Wicklow, where the Vartry River flows into the sea, or perhaps at Skerries, opposite the Island of Inis-Phadraig, and made his way northward towards his old home in Ulster, coasting along the eastern shores of Ireland.

The story says that he had a special purpose in returning to Miliuc, his former master. He had never been quite happy at having run away from him; it lay on Patrick's mind, and it was his purpose to take to Miliuc the price of his ransom, and at the same time to beseech him to accept the message he had come to preach. But his old master heard that his former slave was coming; and so determined was the rough old pagan not to see his slave or receive his message that he gathered all his goods and chattels into his house, and set fire to himself and it, so that when Patrick came to the borders of the land on which he had toiled as a slave, behold the house and his master were ablaze. Then in dejection he turned, and spent some time with a friendly family in the neighbourhood, resting, as it were, before his life-work began.

CHAPTER X.

ST. PATRICK AND HIS WORK.

Authorities :—Same as last chapter.

Of the great work accomplished by St. Patrick in Ireland we know few details with absolute certainty, but we know of its success from his own writings. He speaks of the multitudes of people re-born to God, "so many past my counting"; of the numbers he had baptised and confirmed, and of the clergy ordained for their instruction. When doubt is thrown upon his episcopal orders, he points to the work that has been done, as the best proof that God had approved his ministry among the Irish. He speaks of the great number both of men and of women who had given up their worldly possessions and homes to become monks and nuns, some of them the daughters of chieftains, other slaves, who bore threats and punishment bravely, "Yet they persevere," he says, "and God to many of them grants the grace that they earnestly follow His example."

He says that though it were sweet to go forth into Britain and see his country and his friends again, or yet sweeter to proceed to Gaul, and see the holy men and brethren who laboured there, yet "he would be a recreant" if he left his flock who were struggling to

stand faithful in the midst of heathenism in his adopted country, and so he stays, although he had suffered many troubles, and was in daily fear of a violent death, or captivity, or again to be sold into slavery. Once, he tells us, they had tried to kill him, and had carried him off, and kept him for fourteen days in irons, after stripping him of all that he possessed. It was not easy to be a missionary in those wild days, yet in spite of all, he says, "I journeyed in every direction for your sakes, in many dangers, even to the remote parts, beyond which no one lived, and where no one before had ever come to baptise or ordain clergy, or confirm the people." His letters show what a brave, simple man St. Patrick was, filled with a burning zeal for his work, and for the people amongst whom he had come to live, and it shows how much a man like this may do even if he is unlearned, and very poor, as he tells us he was.

The later Lives say a great deal about St. Patrick's life and work, but we cannot tell how much is true. One of the best known stories is the meeting of St. Patrick with King Laegaire (Laery), monarch of Ireland, at Tara. This king was utterly opposed to Christianity, and it was he who was buried standing up in his armour facing the men of Leinster, his old enemies.* Every year he is said to have celebrated a pagan festival at Tara about Easter-time, and on that night no one was permitted to light a fire in his own house before the

* See Chap. I. "Laegaire and the times of St. Patrick," p. 6.

fire was lighted at Tara. But St. Patrick, either not knowing or not heeding this, lighted a pascal fire, as the custom was, in commemoration of our Lord's resurrection on the eve of Easter-day. This fire was seen by the worshippers at Tara, and they were amazed that anyone could have disobeyed the king's command. All the priests and druids were summoned to the king, and it is said that the druids, though they knew not who had lighted the fire, answered; "Oh, King, live for ever! This fire which we behold, and which was lighted this night before it was lighted in thy house, will not be extinguished for ever, unless it be extinguished this night, for it will overcome all the fires of our worship, and we and thou wilt alike be overthrown by him who lighted it." Whether this story is true or not, the religion of St. Patrick ultimately triumphed over the heathen religion that was in the land before his days.

There are two stories in the later Lives, however, which, even if they did not really happen (and they read as if they were true), are just the sort of things that must often have occurred in St. Patrick's dealings with people brought up as heathens. Many difficulties must have come into their minds which would not occur to us. These difficulties were of two kinds, first those that arose in understanding the new belief, and secondly, those that arose in actually putting the new doctrine into practise. One of the first duties that St. Patrick taught his converts was that of forgiving their enemies. You will

see from this story how difficult they found it to carry this duty out.

On a certain day, St. Patrick had arranged to meet King Laegaire and his people in friendly conference. As they sat round upon the ground, their chins resting on the rims of their shields, waiting for the Saint to come, the king proposed to them this question: "Of all the duties that the cleric preached to you, which do you consider the most difficult?"

"The duty of forgiveness," they promptly replied. "For no sooner shall it become known that everyone will be forgiven, whatever evil he may do, then there will henceforward be no possibility of restraining robbery or of preventing one man from killing another, for he will have no fear of punishment to restrain him."

"What then do you propose to do?" said the king. "What do you yourself advise?" they said. "My suggestion, if you will take it," said the king, "is to see whether the preacher is himself able to practise what he preaches; let one of his own servants be killed before his face: if he forgives, we will rule our lives according to his counsel; if he does not forgive, we will not bind ourselves to obey his law." So they laid a plan to slay the charioteer of St. Patrick as he entered the assembly. One of the warriors was told off to do the deed. As Patrick drove up to the open-air conference, his charioteer was slain before his face, while leaping out of the chariot. Patrick said nothing, but looked upward to

heaven, "where," says the old writer, "were his hosts," that is, the angels defending him. Struck by his silence, or terrified by an earthquake which is said to have occurred, the king and his counsellors prostrated themselves on the ground before him. "Patience, patience, O Patrick!" they cry; "thou hast preached forgiveness; grant now forgiveness to us." And Patrick forgave them all.

After this the king accepted his guidance, and an amicable conference ensued, in which St. Patrick was desired to lay down some rule by which his teaching could be carried out in practice, in spite of the terrible necessities of the time. They finally decided that it would be sufficient to forgive the soul of the criminal, giving him a hope of repentance and heaven, but to inflict death upon his body. A sentence, perhaps, which afforded little comfort to the murderer or thief; but which seems to have been an attempt to substitute capital punishment in Ireland for "eric" or the fine paid for murder.

The next story, which illustrates the difficulty that the heathen felt in understanding the new faith, as well as in practising it, is very interesting, because it shows us how simply St. Patrick set the doctrines of Christianity before the people, and we learn from it what was the doctrine that he taught. It is about two princesses of Connaught, said to have been daughters of King Laegaire (Laery).

St. Patrick came, before sunrise, to a well called Clebach, about a mile from Cruachan, and he and his followers seated themselves near the well. The two daughters of King Laegaire, Ethne the Fair and Fedelm the Ruddy, came in the morning to bathe, as they were wont to do; and they found the assembly of bishops and priests at the well. They did not understand whence they were, in what shape or form, of what race or from what country they came; but thought that they were fairies or gods of the earth, or phantoms. And the maidens said to them: "Who are ye, and whence come ye?" And Patrick said to them: "It were better for you to confess our true God than to enquire about our race." The first maiden said:—

"Who is God? And where is God? And of whom is God? And where is His dwelling?

"Is He in the heavens or the earth? In the sea? In rivers? In mountains? In valleys?

"Make Him known to us. How is He to be seen? How is He to be loved? How is He to be found?

"Is it in youth? Is it in old age that He is to be found?"

St. Patrick, filled with the Holy Ghost, answered and said:—

"Our God is the God of all. The God of heaven and earth, of the sea and rivers: The God of the sun, moon and stars: The God of the high mountains and the low-lying valleys: The God who is above heaven, and in

heaven and under heaven; He has a dwelling in heaven and earth, and the sea and all therein : He gives breath to all : He gives life to all : He is over all : He upholds all : He gives light to the light of the sun : *Lumen noctes et notilias valat:* And He has made wells in the dry land : And dry islands in the ocean : And He has appointed the stars to serve the greater lights.

" He has a Son co-eternal and co-equal with Himself.

" The Son is not younger than the Father : And the Father is not younger than the Son : And the Holy Ghost breathes into them :

" The Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost are undivided.

" I wish to unite you to the heavenly King, as you are daughters of an earthly king, by faith."

And the maidens, as though with one voice and one heart, said :—

" Teach us most carefully how we may believe in the heavenly King : show us how we may behold Him face to face, and we will do whatever you shall say to us."

And Patrick said :—

" Do you believe that by baptism you put off the sin of your father and mother?" "We believe."

" Do you believe in penance after sin?" "We believe."

" Do you believe in life after death? Do you believe in the resurrection on the day of judgment?" " We believe."

"Do you believe in the unity of the church?" "We believe."

And they were baptised and clothed with a white garment on the head.

And they besought that they might behold the face of Christ.

And the Saint said to them: "You cannot see the face of Christ unless you taste death and unless you receive the Sacrifice."

And they answered: "Give us the Sacrifice, so that we may be able to behold the Son, our Spouse."

And they received the Eucharist of God, and they slept in death. They placed them in one bed clad with white garments, and their friends made great lamentation for them. And the days of mourning for the daughters of the king were ended, and they buried them by Clebach Well, and they made a circular mound like a fort, as was the custom among the pagan Irish The well in which the maidens were christened is near Cruachan, in Connaught, and near it is the graveyard still called Ogulla, which means "The Tomb of the Virgins."

While we are speaking of the belief and teaching of the Saint, I must tell you of the beautiful hymn which he once wrote when in great peril. It is called St Patrick's Breastplate. Here are a few lines from it:—

"I bind to myself to-day God's virtue to pilot me,

God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guide me,
God's way to lie before me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to succour me—
Against snares of demons,
Against seductions of vice,
Against every one who wishes ill to me,
Afar and near; alone and in a multitude.
Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
Christ at my right, Christ at my left,
Christ in me, Christ below me, Christ above me,
Christ in breadth, Christ in length, Christ in height.
Christ in the heart of every one who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of every one who speaks to me,
Christ in the eye of every one who sees me,
Christ in the ear of every one who hears me.
I bind myself to-day to a strong virtue, an invocation of the Trinity,
I believe in a Threeness, with confession of a Oneness, in the Creator of the Universe.
Salvation is the Lord's, Salvation is the Lord's, Salvation is Christ's,
May Thy Salvation, Lord, be with us always. Amen."

Before we leave St. Patrick, I should like to say a few words about the second letter which I told you he had written, and which is called the "Epistle to Coroticus." It was also written from Ireland, but when St. Patrick was still a vigorous man, in the very midst of his work. His other letter is sad and pathetic; this is full of life and energy. This letter, like so many of the incidents in St. Patrick's life, shows us something of the wild and dangerous days in which he lived. Coroticus was a prince of Northern Britain, somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Saint's old home. He, joining apparently with the Scots or Irish, probably of some other district, made a raid on the Irish coast, and his soldiers took as prisoners a large number of the Irish, not only men, but women and young girls.

Among them were a considerable number of Christians, some of them newly baptized by St. Patrick. The men they slew at the edge of the sword, but the women, girls and young people they carried off with them to their ships, intending to sell them as slaves to the cruel and heathen Picts of Scotland. This sad news seems to have reached St. Patrick just after he had been preaching in their territory, for of many of them he says, "The holy oil of baptism was still wet upon their brows," when they were snatched away from their homes, and carried off by the fierce soldiers. The very next day St. Patrick wrote an urgent letter to these savage men by the hand of some of his clergy, beseech-

ing that they would give back from amongst their captives at least the women and children who were Christians, and praying them not to sell them into the hands of heathens. Alas! his request was met only by jeers and laughter. Then he with his own hand wrote yet another letter, addressed to Prince Coroticus himself, again and yet more earnestly pleading for the release of the Christian prisoners. It is this letter that we have still to-day. He reminds Coroticus, who appears to have been a professed Christian, how differently the Christians of Gaul (France) and the Roman provinces had acted. They, when the heathen carried off their baptised converts, sent fit and holy men charged with "many thousand coins," to ransom the prisoners, and bring them home; while he, a professedly Christian prince, allowed his soldiers to sell Christian men and women as slaves into foreign lands. He tells Coroticus that he himself, though nobly born, had suffered the sorrows of long years of slavery, and therefore that he could feel for these poor captives. It is a beautiful and touching letter, written in a moment of strong feeling, and he bids his messenger to have it read publicly, and in the presence of Coroticus himself. What effect the letter had on Coroticus we shall never know, or whether he set any of the miserable captives free, but if it did nothing else, it teaches us much of the love and sympathy, and of the noble and lofty spirit of the Apostle of Ireland. St. Patrick is said to have been buried at

Downpatrick, Co. Down, and a very large stone with a simple early Irish cross, and the name "Patric" in Irish characters, has been lately placed upon his grave. It is a very simple and suitable monument.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EARLY LIFE OF ST. COLUMCILLE (521-597 A.D.).

Authorities:—Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore, edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes; Adamnan's "Life of St. Columba," edited by Dr. Reeves (there is an English Translation by Dr. MacCarthy); Martyrology of Donegal, edited by Drs. Reeves and Todd.

THE period of which we are now speaking is that during which Ireland most truly deserved the title of The Isle of Saints.

All over the country, even to-day, we find the cells of early saints and teachers, or places named after them, or traditions of their work. Everywhere, too, we find the remains of the schools where they taught, and the little oratories and churches where they celebrated the Divine Offices. A great number of places in Ireland have names beginning with "Kil," which is the modern form of "cill" or "cella," meaning a church or cell, and many of these have the name of the saint who built them or worshipped in them still placed after it. Thus we have Kilcolman, meaning "Colman's Church," Kilbride or "Briget's Church," Kilbarry or the "Church of St. Barra" of Cork, Kilkenny or the "Church of St. Canice," and many more. Many islands also have retained the name of the saint or hermit who lived on

them in these early days of the church, as Inis Phadraig, which had a church dedicated to St. Patrick. Some of their churches were also called "Teampul," and the lands around the churches were called "Termon-lands," and in nearly every case the name of the holy man to whom each was dedicated has come down to us, as Templemolaga in Cork, the Church of Molaga, and Termonfechin, or St. Fechin's church-land. This ought to make travelling in Ireland very interesting to Irish people, for it brings to mind the old times, when Ireland was full of the light of religion and learning, though many of the countries of Europe were still pagan. Almost every one of the old Irish names of places could tell us a story, either of some pagan hero or of some Christian saint, if we were wise enough to hear

It is one of the greatest, perhaps the very greatest, of these saints that we have to consider to-day. The name of St. Columba or St. Columcille, the "Dove of the Church," as his name implies, is familiar to all Irishmen and Scotchmen. This was not his real name, for he was baptised by the name of Cremthan; Columcille was a pet name given to him by his play-fellows, for he came so often from the church to join their play, that they would say one to another, "Is it from the church that our little Colum comes to-day?" for from his childhood "he gave exceeding love to God, and every day he read the appointed Psalms before beginning his games." So the name, Columcille or

"Dove of the Church," given half in play, adhered to him, as pet names often will, and it is by this name that we know him to-day. It was in a little church called Temple-Douglas (Tulach-Dubhglaise) that the boy read his daily Psalms, about half-way between Letterkenny and Gartan, in Co. Donegal. The ruins of this little church, near which St. Columcille was born, still remain, and it is very interesting to think that it was here that the great missionary first worshipped God. No name could have been more suitable to St. Columcille than the one that the children gave him, for he is said to have founded no less than three hundred churches, partly in Ireland, partly in Scotland and elsewhere. This seems at first almost impossible to believe, but there are still remaining the names or sites of no less than ninety of his churches in Northern and Southern Scotland and in Ireland, and many others must have been destroyed and forgotten. When it is understood how small and easily built these churches were, it is not difficult to believe that one man could have founded so many.

As soon as he was old enough to leave his mother, the boy was put under the charge of a cleric to be trained up and taught to read and write. His fosterer must have been a kind-hearted man, for he chose a very pleasant way of teaching the alphabet. King Alfred the Great was enticed to learn reading by the beautiful pictures shown him by his mother, but the

cleric who taught St. Columcille took a still cleverer way, for he had a cake made, with the letters of the alphabet round it, from which he taught the child, who was afterwards allowed to eat the cake. Though he was only a small boy, he improved so much, that he could soon chant the Psalms perfectly, and one day when his fosterer was unable to sing the Psalms of the day as usual, the boy recited them quite correctly in his place at the hightide Christmas service. Soon he had learned all that his fosterer could teach him, and he went from school to school, as the fashion was in those days, learning from the famous saints who had established them and taught in them. He went first to St. Finnian of Moville, in Co. Down, then to the yet more celebrated St. Finnian of Clonard, and afterwards to Glasnevin, where St. Mobi taught. Let us see what sort of places these monastic schools were. We must put quite out of our minds any sort of school or monastery such as we see to-day. There were at this early period no great buildings, no class rooms or lecture rooms, no libraries, or indeed anything at all like such institutions as we have seen. A monastery and school, for they were one in those days, was simply a collection of huts or stone cells, made by the students themselves, and gathered round one or more little churches not much bigger than the separate cells. Wherever there was plenty of timber they were built of wood and were so small and light that they could easily

be moved from one place to another. Glasnevin, where St. Columba went to learn from St. Mobi, was a group of fifty wooden huts built along the bank of the stream which joins the Tolka River, north of Dublin, and on one occasion when the river was in flood and the huts were in danger of being washed away, they were moved from one side of the river to the other while the students were in church for nocturns. St. Columcille had to swim through the swollen river in his clothes to go to church that night, but he thought no hardship of it. St. Brigit's monastery at Kildare was also built of wood, or rather of peeled rods taken from some passing waggons under which the horses had fallen on the road, from which St. Brigit and her maidens were permitted to take what they needed of the load. Many other famous monasteries were built in the same manner.

They did not think much of comfort, but only of what they could learn, and who could best teach them; so that when a learned monk settled down in any spot, there would speedily gather round him a group of eager scholars, who did not mind how far they travelled in order to learn from the best teachers. The two St. Finnians, with whom St. Columcille studied in turn, had themselves been one to the South of Scotland and one to Wales, to study in well-known monasteries; and even young girls were sent to the colleges, for we find a Pictish princess at Galloway in the South of Scot-

land studying in the same school as that in which St. Finnian was reared. This was very remarkable, and shows how much learning was valued, for it was not very easy for a lady to take a journey in those wild times, when there were no trains or means of getting about.

As soon as the two St. Finnians returned home, they each founded a school in Ireland similar to those in which they had themselves been taught, and these were the first of the great schools for which Ireland afterwards became so famous. St. Finnian's School at Clonard was the most renowned of all, and pupils used to flock there from England as well as from all parts of Ireland. He was called "Finnian the Wise," and "The teacher of the Saints of Ireland," because so many boys who afterwards themselves became saints and teachers were educated under him.* The most famous of all his pupils was Saint Columcille, who now came to his school, and, like the other students, added with his own hands his little hut to those already there. He asked Finnian in what place he should build his hut. "Build it in front of the church," said Finnian.

Let us see what sort of life a boy lived in one of these great schools. It was a busy life, for they had not only to learn lessons, and to attend the services of the church, but they had also to take their share in the general work of the place. The monks and students

* See Chap. xiv. "St. Finnian of Clonard."

alike seem to have taken part in cultivating the ground, in grinding and baking bread, and in doing the duties both of farmers and cooks. Even the bishops and clergy seem at first to have worked with their hands, and to have laboured in the fields, but as the establishments grew larger the work must have been divided, and the lay brethren no doubt performed the ordinary duties, while the monks and clergy gave themselves to teaching and the services of the church. But in St. Columcille's time all shared the work, and even men of noble birth ploughed and reaped and attended to the wants of the establishment. Nor did they feel this degrading, for they were taught that in such work and useful labour God can be found as well as in the service of the church. Of a Scottish saint it is said that, though he was of noble birth, "when he learned that among the works of men's hands the cultivation of the earth approached nearest to the Divine contemplation, he willingly practised with his own hands the lowly art of cultivating the fields." * As time went on, the fame of the Irish schools spread abroad, and scholars flocked to them, not only from countries near at hand, but from distant lands. Princes came with the rest, amongst them Alfrid, Prince of Northumbria (not Alfred the Great), who wrote a sweet poem on the beauty of Ireland † and King Dagobert of France, who both sought

* St. Nathalan of Aberdeen.

† See Chapter xviii., p. 179.

refuge in Ireland when they were exiled from their native countries. No scholar was asked for money for his schooling, he was taught for nothing so long as he cared to stay and do his part in the general work; even food and clothes were provided if the student was in want;* but often these foreign students when they went home sent handsome gifts to the monasteries where they and their countrymen had studied, and so the schools became rich, and changed very much in course of time. The Emperor Charlemagne, for instance, sent a handsome gift of money to the Irish monastery of Clonmacnois, in gratitude for the instruction the monks had given to many pupils from France. But this was in later times.

Let me tell you one or two stories which we find in the old accounts about the children in these schools. There was a youth named Ninnid Squint-eyed who came to study with St. Finnian of Clonard, in the same school as that in which St. Columcille had been educated. He had no book with him. "Ask one of the other scholars for a book," said Finnian. Ninnid made the round of the little huts where the scholars lived, but no one would lend him his book. Every book in those days was written by hand; they did not for hundreds of years afterwards know how to print them; on this account they were very rare and precious, and no one liked to part with his books, even for a little while.

* Bede's Eccl. History, Book iii, Chap. xxvii.

"Have you asked the little boy whose dwelling is across the green?" said Finnian. "No, but I will go now," said Ninnid. Just as Ninnid came up, the boy, whose name was Ciaran, had reached the middle text of St. Matthew's Gospel: *Omnia quæcumque vultis ut faciant homines vobis ita et vos faciatis illis*, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them."

"I have come to borrow a book," says Ninnid. "Well, that is strange indeed," said Ciaran, "for what I have just read, and what the text saith to me, is "that I should do unto every one what I would desire to be done to me. Take the book, therefore." Next day when the boys were at lessons, they asked Ciaran, "Where is your book?" "He gave it to me," said Ninnid.* One of the boys said mockingly, "We will call him 'Ciaran half-Matthew.'" "No, indeed," said Finnian, "his name shall rather be, 'Ciaran half-Ireland,' for half of Ireland will call themselves his followers, and half mine." This was the boy who afterwards became the founder of the famous monastery of Clonmacnois on the Shannon, a school equally important with that of his old master, St. Finnian of Clonard. This little incident must have happened about the time that Columcille was at the school, for Ciaran was one of his companions

* The Church Inis-mac-saint, in Lough Erne, was Ninnid's foundation. The ruins of an old church and rude cross of great size still remain there.

there, and both these boys were so distinguished among their companions for their holiness, industry, and energy, that it seemed to St. Finnian that from his school two moons arose, a golden moon and a silvery moon. The golden moon travelled onwards till it reached the North of the Island, and Ireland and Scotland grew bright in its beams; this was Columcille with the grace of his noble birth and his wisdom preaching in Ireland and in Scotland. The silvery moon rested by the Shannon, and Ireland glistened at her centre. This was Ciaran with the brightness of his virtues and his holy deeds.

The monastery of Clonard has been swept away, no trace of it remains; and St. Finnian, the beloved teacher of the boys, died of the terrible "Yellow Plague" which swept over all these islands about 562 A.D. But Clonmacnois, the foundation of St. Ciaran, is still to be seen beside the Shannon, about twenty miles south of Athlone. It is one of those groups of seven churches, such as we find also at Glendalough, and there are fine crosses and a round tower, which were, however, built much later than St. Finnian's time.

It was also an epidemic of the Yellow Plague which forced Columcille to bring his school-life to an end. After leaving St. Finnian, he went, as we saw, to Glasnevin, near Dublin, but a fresh outbreak of this terrible disease obliged St. Mobi to send his pupils to their homes, for fear they should catch the infection. So Columcille went back to Donegal, and soon the great work of his life began in earnest.

CHAPTER XII.

ST. COLUMCILLE LEAVES IRELAND.

Authorities:—As before, with the Annals of Clonmacnois; Petrie's Tara; Manus O'Donnell's Life of the Saint, &c.

We reach now a very important period in St. Columcille's career. His time of preparation was over, and the work of his life was about to begin. He set himself about it with the splendid energy with which he did everything that he took up. His first step was to stir up the interest of the prince reigning over his own country, who was a cousin of his, for Columcille was a member of the reigning house, and himself a prince. If he had not chosen to become a monk, he might possibly have succeeded Aedh as Chief of Tirconnell or Western Ulster. He asked his cousin, Prince Aedh, to give him a plot of land within the royal fort of Derry, on which he might build a church. The prince gave him a piece of land on what is called the Island of Derry, a slope of rising ground, covered with oak trees. The name Derry is taken from the Irish word '*doire*,' which means an Oak-wood. St. Columcille had a mind filled with the love of all beautiful natural things, trees, and birds, the flow of water and the roundness of the hills. He wrote many fine poems

which show us how these things possessed his mind with joy, for he was one of the greatest poets of those times. It grieved him so much to cut down even a few oaks in order to erect his tiny church, that he would not build it with the chancel towards the East, as is the custom, for fear of having to cut down the trees to make room for it; and he laid strict injunctions on all his successors to spare the lovely grove, while if any of the trees were blown down, they were not to be destroyed, but some of them were to be retained for fuel for the guest-house of the monastery, and the rest to be given to the poor. Indeed, Columcille loved his little church at Derry, as we all love the first thing we have undertaken. "Each leaf of the oaks of Derry," he wrote long afterwards, when he was far away in Scotland, " is crowded full of the angels of heaven. My Derry, my little oak-grove and my little cell, O God Eternal in heaven above, woe be to any one who does hurt to it." And in one of his songs he says—

" For this do I love Derry,
For its calmness, for its purity,
For that white angels throng it
From the one end to the other."

St. Columcille seems to have had a peculiar love for oak-trees, for he chose a great oak as his shelter while he abode in Kells, a tree that was known as ' St. Colum-

cille's Oak ' until it was blown down through the blast of a mighty storm centuries afterwards.

Derry was only the first of many churches founded in all parts of Ireland by St. Columcille; he seems to have moved from place to place, and everywhere to have established churches or small monastic settlements, several of which afterwards grew to be places of fame and importance. Though the monasteries no longer exist, the remains of ancient churches, round towers and beautiful Celtic crosses, added afterwards to adorn the places of burial of abbots or persons worthy of special honour, remain to mark where the great schools once stood; in other places, the name of the diocese has been taken from the ancient foundation. Raphoe is one of these. It is wonderful, when we consider how simple these little churches were, that any relics of them should have remained through hundreds of years; but perhaps it is because they are low and small that they have not been blown down or crumbled away. Among the churches which St. Columcille established at this time were Raphoe and Durrow, Glencolumcille, Kells, Monasterboice, Lambay and Swords, and at nearly all of these, some buildings or crosses, or at least a well, remains bearing the Saint's name.

The round towers were built later, when the country was troubled by descents of the Northmen and other enemies; they were used as places of shelter both for the people and for the sacred vessels and books.

They were usually divided inside into three stories, reached by ladders, and the outside door was often very high up in the wall, so that when the people were inside, and the ladder drawn up, no one could possibly enter.* At Glencolumcille in Donegal there is a holy well which bears the Saint's name, and a flat stone which is called St. Columcille's Bed. At Monasterboice and Kells there are remains of ancient churches, round towers and crosses. The churches were probably built soon after St. Columcille's time, though the crosses and towers are later by three centuries or more. Monasterboice is not far from Drogheda, and can be seen in the same interesting drive or walk which takes the lover of Irish antiquities past the pagan tombs of New Grange and Dowth; so that much may be learned about both pagan and Christian Ireland on a single day's excursion from Dublin.

Kells is even more interesting, for we have there an ancient oratory called St. Columcille's House. It is, for those days, a lofty building, with a high-pitched roof, and is lighted by two small windows. Inside there is a round barrel-roof beneath the outer pointed roof of stone, and between these are three little chambers, which have to be reached by a long ladder, and entered through a hole in the inside roof.† It was in this little chamber that a very beautiful copy of the Gospels in Latin, called the Book of

* See Chapter XX., p. 206.
† See Chapter XIX., p. 200.

Kells, was discovered. It was probably hidden there for safety in troublous times. Throughout his life, much of St. Columcille's time was given to the copying of portions of the Holy Scriptures, particularly of the Gospels and the Psalms. We are told that he wrote three hundred books with his own hand, and that he left one in every church which he built. There are many stories told of his diligence in copying, and the monks of his Order were equally in earnest. Many of the most beautiful illuminated manuscripts of the Holy Gospels that remain to us are the work of Columban monks in later times. Among these are the Book of Durrow, and the most rare and precious of all, the Book of Kells, which is now in Trinity College, Dublin, and is considered one of the most beautiful books in the world. Let me tell you one or two of the many stories of the Saint's passionate love of books. Once when he was in Iona, in a retreat which he had made for himself away from the monastery, where he could pray and write in quiet, a brother came to ask him to bless a knife which he was about to use. The Saint was so occupied that he extended his hand without once lifting his face from the book that he was writing, and blessed the knife by forming over it the sign of the cross. Another day, he saw a man who was ' not of very sharp wit ' coming across the water in a boat from the opposite island, and he prayed his servant, Dermot, to watch his ink-horn and see that the

ink was not spilled; but Dermot having left the place for a moment, we are told that the 'troublesome guest did arrive, and in his haste to kiss the Saint, tipped over the ink-horn with the hem of his garment, and spilled the ink.' Like the Venerable Bede, the Saint was still writing when death came to him, and the pen fell from his tired hand. He had come to the eleventh verse of the thirty-third Psalm (Vulg.) which says, "They that seek the Lord shall lack nothing." "Baithen will write the rest," he said, turning to his devoted disciple and successor; and Baithen took up the pen at the appropriate words, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

We find that books, which were all, you must remember, written by hand, and therefore very slow to prepare, became so numerous, that students used to possess several at once. They were carried in leathern satchels, and we read of one boy, while crossing a bridge and looking over, letting his whole satchel of books fall into the water.

Let me tell you the history of the wonderful book which was the cause of the withdrawal of the Saint from his native land and of the founding of his monastery at Hi or Iona in Alba (Scotland). It was a copy of the Psalter in Latin, which still exists and which is preserved in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, though it is over fifteen hundred years since it was written. It is called the 'Cathach' or 'Fighter,' for it was preserved by the

clan of the O'Donnells of Donegal (the clan to which St. Columcille belonged), and it was always carried by them into battle, because they thought that it would bring them victory. It has a beautiful case, in which it is kept, also of great age, made of brass, with the figure of St. Columcille in the centre, holding up his right hand in blessing, and with a book in the left hand. It is very closely written within; a portion of it has been lost, and some of the portion that remains is damaged and not very easy to read. This book is said to have been the cause of St. Columcille's exile from Ireland. This is how it happened. St. Finnian of Moville, Co. Down, had a very precious copy of the Psalms which St. Columcille greatly wished to possess. At one time when he was staying with St. Finnian, he sat up all night copying the manuscript, but St. Finnian heard of it and was very much annoyed, so much annoyed indeed, that he appealed to the King of Ireland to settle the matter. Finnian wished to take away the copy that St. Columcille had made, and keep both his original manuscript and the copy. King Dermot gave his decision in Finnian's favour and Columcille was forced to give up his copy. St. Columcille spoke very wisely and well at this synod, saying that it was not at all for his own benefit that he had done the work, but for the good of the people, and that it was for their instruction that he laboured so much in multiplying copies of the Holy Scriptures. The King,

however, decided in favour of St. Finnian against St. Columcille.* St. Columcille, being himself a prince of royal blood, was very angry at the King's decision, which in this case does not seem to have been quite just. His friends and tribe, too, were annoyed that one of their princely house should have been refused what he wanted by the King, and the Princes Fergus and Donnall, with Aedh of Connaught, gathered their hosts together, and a great fight, called the Battle of Cuildremhne (Culdrevne), took place, in which many were killed on both sides.† This battle was fought about the year 560-564, when Columcille was about forty years old. It was the beginning of a great change in his life, for it was at this time that Columcille left his native land, and set forth on his exile to his adopted country, Scotland, or Alba, as it was then still called.

It seems to have weighed upon the Saint's mind that it was his quarrel that had caused the death of so many persons in this battle. His temper was quick, but his heart was tender; and he could not forgive himself for

* Keating says that it was a copy of the Gospels that St. Finnian possessed, but in O'Donnell's "Life" it is distinctly stated that "The Cathach" is the name of the book on account of which the Battle (of Cuildremhne) was fought; but see Chap. xxi., p. 232.

† A secondary cause of the battle was the safeguarding by Columcille of a son of Aedh, Prince of Connaught, who had slain a nobleman during the peaceful Feis of Tara, and who was demanded by the King, in order that he might receive just punishment.

the misery he had allowed. He inflicted upon himself the heaviest punishment which he could think of, namely, exile from his native land. Columcille's devotion to Ireland was deep and lasting. Though he seems only once to have returned, to accomplish some very important political objects, his heart yearned to see his native land. Even the birds that came from Ireland were dear to him, and all pilgrims who came to Iona from across the Irish Sea were made welcome. His heart seems to have been constantly turning to the monasteries that he had founded there and to the friends that he had left behind. Here is a story to illustrate this. One day when he was in Iona, he called to him a brother monk and said that he was in great anxiety about a crane that would be driven by storms to the beach of Iona, and would there sink down exhausted. The bird, he said, was flying from his own old home where he had been born, Gartan, in Co. Donegal. He besought the monk on that account to watch for its arrival, and tend it when it came, so that it might have strength to fly back again to Ireland. The brother so well carried out the wish of his Superior that the wearied bird, after three days' nursing, gently rose on its wings to a great height and, marking its path through the air homewards, it directed its course across the sea to Ireland, straight as it could fly on a calm day.

St. Columcille sailed for Scotland from the Hill of

Howth, near Dublin, then called Benn Edair, and as the boat moved away from the beloved shores, he wrote this beautiful song :—

Delightful it were on Benn Edair to rest,
Before going over the white, white sea,
The dash of the wave as it launches its crest
On the wind-beaten shore is delight to me.

Delightful it were on Benn Edair to rest,
When one has come over the white sea foam,
His coracle cleaving her way to the west,
Through the sport of the waves as she beats for home.

How swiftly we travel! there is a grey eye
Looks back upon Erin, but it no more
Shall see, while the stars shall endure in the sky,
Her women, her men, or her stainless shore.

Melodious her clerics, melodious her birds,
Her children are gentle, her seniors wise,
Her men are illustrious, truthful in words,
Her women have virtues for love to prize.

From the plank of the oak where in sorrow I lie
I am straining my sight through the water and wind,
And large is the tear from the soft grey eye
Looking back on the land that it leaves behind.

(Translation by Dr. D. Hyde).

CHAPTER XIII.

ST. COLUMCILLE IN HI (IONA).

Authorities:—As before, with Jocelyn's Life of St. Kentigern (St. Mungo). The account of the death of St. Columcille is taken, almost without alteration, from Adamnan's Life. For the whole of the Early Christian period, Dr. Healy's "Ireland's Schools and Scholars" will be found useful.

Let us ask why St. Columcille turned his steps towards Alba when he left the shores of Ireland. You will remember that about sixty years before this time, the colony of Scottish Dalriada had been strengthened by the arrival of Fergus Mór and his brother who, with their followers, settled in Cantyre, Lorn and the islands of Isley and Jura, or the district now called Argyleshire. This little Irish colony was wedged in amongst a nation of Picts, and it had much ado to hold its own. Moreover, it was a colony, not only of Irishmen, but of Christian Irishmen, in the midst of pagans of another race. The Northern Picts were still heathen: it was Columcille who first taught them Christianity; the Southern Picts had been professedly Christians, but had relapsed into heathenism. It was probably from this district that St. Patrick had come, and in his time there was some leaven of Christian teaching amongst the people; the British Prince, Coroticus, to whom he wrote about the slaves, professed to be a Christian,

though in his acts he was little better than the heathen about him, for he intended to sell the Irish Christian captives of war to the pagan Picts of his own country. No doubt the thoughts of St. Columcille had often turned to this Irish colony, especially as he belonged to the same great Ulster clan from which the Princes of Dalriada sprang; they were among his closest kindred; and he knew that his distant kinsmen would receive him with a ready welcome. He heard that they were much oppressed, for besides trying to sustain themselves and make their way in the new land, they were obliged to pay heavy taxes to the mother-country, which still claimed them as her own. They were in a double danger, the danger of being crushed out by the Picts, and the danger of relapsing into heathenism. St. Columcille felt that here was a cause to which he might well devote his life, and he determined to go and save them.

And save them he did. It was through his intercession that Scottish Dalriada was ultimately set free from the burdens laid upon it by the home-country, and started on a career of free expansion. It rapidly became influential and powerful, and at a later date it gave both its name and its kings to the whole of Scotland. The reign of Kenneth mac Alpin saw the two rival races brought together by his marriage with a Pictish princess, and the crown of a united country was set upon his head. The second aim

of the exiled Saint was even more effectually accomplished. By the establishment of the monastery of Hi or Iona and its dependent churches and branches, not only was Southern Scotland retained for the faith, but the Northern Picts followed its example, and became converts to the Saint's teaching.

There is no doubt that Columcille chose Iona as his dwelling-place because it lay on the borders between the Christian Irish settlers on the one hand and the heathen Picts on the other; it thus formed a convenient centre from which to prosecute his work. He did not go alone to Iona. Some old and faithful friends went with him, and his first care was to build simple huts like those they were accustomed to live in for their dwellings, and a church for worship. Round these sprang up all the necessary buildings required for the community, and a wall enclosed the whole settlement. We do not read that there was a school at Iona; it seems chiefly to have been a centre for missionary work; and from it small dependent communities were established all over the West of Alba and even in the North among the pagan Picts. But as the fame of St. Columcille spread, people gathered to the monastery from all parts. Many who loved him followed him from Ireland, and we hear of Picts and Saxons coming to him either for a visit or for instruction and to join the community. Indeed, so many came, that St. Columcille often found it difficult to find quiet for prayer and meditation, and for his

favourite occupation of copying the Holy Scriptures. Therefore he built a hut apart from the monastery, on the side of the hill, whence he could overlook the sea and landing-place, and there he would retire for seasons of rest and quiet. Sometimes he went further, and spent some days in the islands of Islay or Oransay, where also he had little abodes. But wherever he was, his spirit was with his monks, and they always felt that he was not really far from them. A beautiful legend tells us that his monks who were wearied with the harvest work felt every evening, when returning from their long day of toil and nearing the monastery, a sweet fragrance, as if all the flowers of the earth were collected together, and throwing out the sweetest odour. Their hearts, too, were uplifted with heavenly joy, and warmed as with heat, and so were they comforted that they forgot the heavy loads that they carried on their backs, until they seemed to have hardly any weight to bear. They could not understand why they felt so refreshed, until Baithen, the companion and successor of St. Columcille, told them the cause. "You all know," he said, "our Father Columba's tender affection for us, that he is always mindful of our toil, and grieved when we return late to the monastery. Now because he cannot come on this occasion to meet us in person, he is come to us in spirit to comfort and cheer us." When they heard these words they kneeled down, and thanked and blessed Christ in his faithful servant.

The great work of St. Columcille in Alba was the conversion of the Picts. He had not long been in Iona when he took this great work in hand. He passed in his missionary journey right across Alba from South-West to North-East, and arrived at Inverness, the dwelling of Brude, the Pictish King. The King ordered the gates of his fort to be closed against him, but having made the sign of the cross the Saint advanced boldly, and knocked at the gate. It instantly opened wide and the missionaries passed in. The King and his councillors, hearing that he had entered, were filled with alarm, but they came forward to meet the new teachers and listened respectfully to their message. Ever afterwards the King showed all honour and reverence to St. Columcille for his great sanctity and holiness, and permitted him to teach his people, so that by degrees the whole country was converted to Christianity. All over Scotland we find the little cells that were planted by the followers of St. Columcille, who scattered themselves through the length and breadth of the land, instructing the inhabitants; nay, we even find that they travelled much farther, for there are parishes and churches as far south as Cornwall called by his name, and there is an ancient cross near Newquay called St. Colum's Cross.

St. Columcille made at least one visit to Ireland before his death, but, in accordance with his vow, he is said to have constantly covered his face with the cowl,

so that he might not permit himself the joy of looking on his native land. The fame of his sanctity and of his great work had spread, and he was everywhere received with honour.

There is a beautiful story told of the meeting of St. Columcille with another great Saint, who taught and founded churches in the South of Scotland and North of England at the same time that St. Columcille was preaching further North. His name was St. Mungo,* and he is the patron saint of Glasgow. Both were aged men, St. Mungo the older of the two; and they had heard much of each other's labours, and had often desired to meet. In their old age they arranged a meeting on the borderland, each travelling a great distance to find the other. They seem to have felt that the occasion was a peculiarly solemn one, and they travelled with chosen bands of monks. St. Columcille divided his followers into three bands and sent them forward to announce his coming. St. Mungo also marshalled his followers, first the young, then the middle-aged, and lastly the aged; he himself in their midst, white and hoary with age, venerable in appearance, gesture and bearing. As they pressed forward, his pupils burst into song, "The way of the just is uprightness: thou, Most Upright, dost weigh the path of

* 'Mungo' was, like 'Columcille,' a pet-name, meaning "Dearest Friend." His real name was St. Kentigern, but the pet-name is more familiar.

the just;" and the choir of St. Columba responded, "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Sion appeareth before God." One of St. Columcille's train asked him, "Hath St. Mungo come in the first company of singers or in the second company?" "Neither in the first nor yet in the second cometh the gentle Saint," replied St. Columcille. "He comes with the aged, clothed in heavenly brightness, robed in light as with a garment; elect of God and sanctified." Then the two Saints met and fell on each other's neck, interchanging embraces. And they felt no need of food, so glad were they to nourish each other with spiritual refreshment. They remained several days together, and when they parted, never to meet again in life, they exchanged their pastoral staves in token of mutual love. That which St. Columcille gave to St. Mungo was long preserved in the Cathedral of Ripon.

The time came when St. Columcille's work was over, and the old man of seventy-seven years drew near to his death. The story of his last days is most touchingly told. He seems to have been more than ever anxious to leave all behind him in order. Six days before his death, while he was celebrating the solemn Mass, as usual on Sundays, the face of the venerable man was suddenly seen to become radiant with joy. They asked him the cause of his gladness, and he replied, "I beheld a vision of an angel of the Lord looking on and blessing

us. He is come to demand a certain deposit dear to God." None of the monks understood what the Abbot meant by the "deposit" of which he spake, but they afterwards knew that he spoke of his soul, which had, as it were, been lent to him by God, and was now called back to God again. On the Saturday evening of the same week, the day before his death, he was making his rounds of the winter's store of winnowed corn, and went to bless the barn in which it was gathered in. As they turned to leave, he said, " I am thankful that this time also, if I should be obliged to leave you, you will have a sufficient supply for the year." "How often you afflict us now," said his faithful attendant, " by speaking of your departure from this world." To whom the Saint replied : " I have a little secret, and if you promise not to reveal it to anyone before my death I will speak to you freely of it. This day in the Holy Scriptures is called the Sabbath,* which means rest. To-day is indeed a Sabbath to me, for it is for me the last day of this weary life, in which I rest after the fatigue of my earthly labours; and this night at midnight, which commences the solemn day of the Lord, I shall go to Him. For already my Lord Jesus Christ deigns to invite me; and to Him I shall go, as He calls me, in the middle of the night. For so the Lord Himself hath revealed it to me." His attendant, hearing this sad announcement, began to weep bitterly, and the

* *i.e.* The Jewish Sabbath, which is our Saturday.

Saint endeavoured to console him as well as he could. He left the barn, and in going back to the monastery, rested half-way at a place where a cross, afterwards put up and still standing fixed in a millstone, may be observed on the roadside. While the Saint, bowed down with age, sat there to rest a little, there came up to him a white pack-horse, the same that used to carry the milk-vessels from the field where the cows were milked to the monastery. The poor animal seemed to know that his master was about to leave him and that he should see him no more, and going up to the Saint, he put his head into his bosom, and began to utter plaintive cries, weeping large tears more like a human being than an animal. The attendant was about to drive away the old horse, but the Saint would not allow him, saying: "Suffer the poor animal, that is so fond of me, to pour out his grief into my bosom. You see that while you, who are endowed with reason, knew nothing of my departure, this poor beast without sense has in some way been taught by the Creator to know that his master is about to leave him." And the Saint blessed the horse, which turned away from him in sadness. Leaving the spot, he ascended the hillock that overlooks the monastery, and remained for some time on its summit; there, gazing on the buildings beneath him, he raised his two hands and blessed the place, saying, "This place, small and humble as it is, will yet be highly honoured, not only

by Irish people, but by foreign and barbarous nations and their rulers; great reverence will be given to it from the saints of other churches." This prophesy came true, for it was from Iona, and the monasteries that sprang from it, that the North and centre of England were in large part converted in later Saxon times; and the Columban monks from the different monasteries founded by St. Columcille in Scotland and Ireland went forth to every part of western Europe and founded monasteries, subduing even kings and princes to the faith of Christ. Large parts of France, Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, were taught by Irish missionaries, and they even penetrated to Iceland and established there churches dedicated to St. Columba.

After these words St. Columcille descended the hill, and having returned to the monastery he sat in his cell, transcribing the Psalter. Coming to the verse of the Thirty-third Psalm, where it is written, "They that seek the Lord, shall not fail in every good:" "Here," he said, "I must stop writing, for the page is finished. Let Baithen write the words that follow." The last words that he had written seemed indeed most applicable to the holy man, to whom eternal goods had been given in abundance; and the words that Baithen wrote, "Come, ye children, hearken unto me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord," seemed equally suitable to him who was to succeed St. Columcille as Abbot of his monastery. Having written the verse at the end of the

page, the Saint went to the church for the office of Sunday night. This being over, he immediately returned to his cell, and spent the remainder of the night on his bed, having for his couch a bare flag, and a stone for his pillow. While resting there he gave his last instructions to his attendant for the brethren, saying, "This, dear children, is my last advice to you, that you live with each other in sincere love and peace; and God, the Comforter of the good, will assist you; and I being in His Presence will intercede for you; and He will bestow upon you blessings for this life and eternal rewards in the life to come, if you thus keep the Divine precepts."

After these words, as the happy hour of his departure drew near, the Saint became gradually silent. Then as soon as the midnight bell tolled, rising quietly, he hastened to the church, which he reached before the rest, and entering alone knelt down in prayer near the altar. It seemed to Dermot, his attendant, who followed him, as if the whole church was for a moment filled with light, but as he approached the door it disappeared, and entering the church, he cried out in a mournful voice, "Where are you, Father?" and groping in the dark, before the brethren came with lights, he found the Saint in a recumbent posture before the altar, and raising him up a little, he sat down beside him, and supported the saintly head upon his bosom. Meanwhile, the choir came up in haste with lights, and seeing that their Father was dying, they began to weep. But

the Saint raised his eyes and looked around, with a wonderful expression of gladness and joy; perhaps he saw the holy angels coming to meet him. Dermot then raised his holy hand, that he might bless his assembled monks, the venerable Father himself making an effort to do the same as well as he was able, that since he could not in words, he might at least by the motion of his hand, bless the brethren as he was dying. And having given them his holy benediction, he immediately expired. Yet after his soul had left the body, his face still wore a wonderful expression of joy, insomuch that he appeared not like one who was dead but as one who was in slumber. Meanwhile the whole church resounded with lamentations.

There is little left of the original monastery of Iona, as it was in St. Columcille's time. The buildings now on the island are all of later date. All that remains of the original monastery are two beehive cells, the ancient landing-place, traces of the encircling wall, and the remains of a broken cross; yet no one can go to Iona to-day without thinking more of the noble man who founded that monastery, and accomplished such a great work from it, than of the splendid buildings that are now to be seen there. For there is no building so great on earth as the building of a noble life. And such a life was St. Columcille's.

Towards the end of the eighth century Iona was ravaged and destroyed by the Norsemen, who were

plundering the western coasts of Scotland. In 802, only a few years later, it was again visited by them and burned to the ground, and in a subsequent raid, the unfortunate monks were slain to the number of sixty-eight. So unsafe was it to remain in Iona, that the Abbot retired to Kells in Ireland, another of St. Columcille's foundations, and the relics of the founder are said to have been carried over to Ireland for safety. Thus the central church of the Columban Order fell, and the monastery which Columcille had founded at Kells became henceforth the head of the Order.

CHAPTER XIV.

ST. FINNIAN OF CLONARD.

Authorities:—Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore, edited by Dr. Wh. Stokes; Martyrology of Donegal, O'Clery, edited by Drs. Todd and Reeves; Lives of the Cambro-British Saints, edited by Rev. W. Rees, &c.

We have now to speak further of St. Finnian of Clonard, who was called "The teacher of the Saints of Ireland."* There were two famous men of the name in Ireland at the same time, St. Finnian of Moville, and the St. Finnian of Clonard of whom we are going to speak. St. Columcille learned from both in turn. Both the St. Finnians had studied in Britain, and they most probably brought home with them the idea of establishing in Ireland schools and monasteries like those in which they had themselves been educated. St. Finnian of Moville (Co. Down), he with whom Columcille quarrelled about the book, had been at school at a monastery in the South of Alba (Scotland), founded by probably the first Christian missionary who ever came to Alba, St. Ninnian.

St. Finnian of Clonard was chiefly educated in

* See Chapter xi., p. 101.

Wales. But his earliest teacher was a bishop named Fortchern of Trim, who had a Welsh mother, and perhaps she may have talked to the boy about her home far away in Wales, and of her people there, and so have made him wish to go. Perhaps, too, she taught him some Welsh, for you will see that he knew it almost as well as he knew Irish.

St. Finnian spent all his youth in Wales, until he was thirty years of age, but he is said to have travelled to Tours in Southern France before he returned to Ireland. He was very much esteemed in Wales, and indeed it is said to have been he who gave the Welsh their patron saint, St. David. There were at that time in Britain two saints equally famous, St. Gildas, the historian, and St. David, the great preacher, and both were such good and remarkable men that the Welsh people could not decide which should be Primate and head of their churches. They referred the question to another man of eminence, St. Cadoc, who was scarcely less famous than the two who had been chosen, and asked him to decide. Perhaps he was afraid that whatever he determined would offend some of his friends, so he said that he would rather that young Finnian, who was not himself a Welshman, should be called upon. St. David was very much surprised at this, but he said that if St. Finnian could give his opinion in good Welsh, they would agree to abide by his decision. St. Finnian's knowledge of the language came to his

aid, and he is said to have awarded the Primacy to St. David in such good Welsh "that it might have been his mother-tongue." The town and cathedral of St. David's is in the extreme south-west of Wales, and here was his monastery in former times. This story shows how well the Welsh thought of St. Finnian, even when he was a young man. He was also once employed by them to go as a messenger to the army of the Saxons, who were then ravaging the borders of Wales, and who had pitched their camp on the side of a lofty mountain; the Saxons, however, refused to give the truce which the British or Welsh asked for through their young Irish herald.

His schooling over, Finnian returned home to Ireland. He is said to have desired to stay in Europe for further study, but an angel said to him, "Whatever thou wouldst gain in other lands, will equally be given to thee here. Go and renew faith and belief in Ireland after Patrick." So he crossed over to the Harbour of Wexford, the shortest way between South Wales and Ireland, and he was lovingly received by Murtach, son of the King of Leinster, who offered him any site he chose in Leinster on which to build a church. He chose a spot on which was growing a fragrant apple-tree, and there they cut down trees and built an oratory. He called it Achad Aball,* or the "Apple-tree field," and it is still called Aghowle, in Co. Wicklow. He settled

* Mod. Irish, "Achadh abhla."

down here for sixteen years, until he was again warned by an angel that this was not to be his final resting-place, or the place of his resurrection. The saints always beautifully spoke of the place where they died as the "place of their resurrection," because they trusted that from the place where they were buried they would rise again to everlasting life.

He moved northward, paying a friendly visit on his way to St. Brigit of Kildare, in the great monastery over which she presided. It was a mixed monastery of both men and women, and Finnian remained there for some time, reading and teaching. Thence he went on till he reached the river Boyne, beside whose slow-flowing waters he erected two monasteries, one of which was the great school of Clonard, with which his name has ever since been associated. His fame was already widely known, and soon pupils came flocking to his school, and it is said that not one of them left at the end of the course without receiving from him a crosier or gospel or reliquary; these became the most cherished possessions of the various monasteries built by his pupils all over the country. It was the custom for the smaller settlements to be grouped under the control of the older institutions from which they sprang, so that when we read that St. Finnian had three thousand pupils under him, we are not to think of them as being all in one place, but as belonging to those smaller foundations which looked to the central

monastery and to St. Finnian himself as their head, and which were all under one rule of life and discipline. From his monastery at Clonard went out some of the most famous saints and preachers of that day: St. Ciaran, the founder of Clonmacnois; St. Comgall, the founder of Bangor, Co. Down; St. Columcille and St. Brendan; the latter took a wonderful voyage to the West, and seems to have discovered America hundreds of years before Christopher Columbus was born. They were a most interesting group of students, full of high aspirations and enthusiasm, and we can imagine how they must have encouraged and inspired each other as they prepared themselves for the lives of hard work and self-sacrifice which were before most of them. There St. Columcille made two loving and devoted friends, both of whom followed him to Scotland, St. Comgall, who gave up for a time his great work at Bangor to help St. Columcille, and St. Canice, the patron saint of Kilkenny, who is equally well known in Scotland as St. Kenneth. We read that one day St. Finnian sent a pupil unexpectedly to find out what each of his young scholars was doing. St. Columcille, whose love for animals is shown in so many stories, was found with his hands stretched forth, so rapt in contemplation and in prayer, that the birds were fearlessly flying round his head and resting on his hands.* When Finnian heard that, he said, "The hands of that man

* A similar story is told of St. Kevin, of Glendalough,

shall give me communion and sacrifice in my last days."

There is, alas! no part of Clonard still standing, but of the monastery of one of his pupils we still have the interesting remains. Let us follow this pupil, St. Ciaran, the founder of Clonmacnois, to his future home. About twenty miles south of Athlone, on the Shannon, the group of buildings which composed this Christian settlement is to be found. There are now to be seen two round towers, three standing crosses of elaborate workmanship and several that have fallen, and the ruins of seven little churches in the early Irish style of architecture, all enclosed in a surrounding wall or "cashel," as it is called. It is the most complete group in Ireland, next to Glendalough, St. Kevin's monastery, which was built later; and though it is now deserted, it was once a place of industry and importance. Many scholars, famous throughout Europe, taught there in olden times. The original buildings were of wood, for we learn that St. Ciaran himself drove in the first stake with the help of Dermot, the future King of Ireland.

Ciaran was the son of a man named Beoit, a well-known wright, specially noted as a builder of chariots, but accomplished in all kinds of handicrafts. We learn from one account that he had been carried away in bondage to Britain from his home in Ulster, and that on his return the taxes were so heavy at his old home that he was forced to leave and take refuge in Con-

naught. Here Ciaran, his third son, was born. Ciaran came of a religious family, for out of five sons and three daughters, four sons were arch-presbyters, and the other a deacon, while two of the daughters were nuns and one a pious widow. As they were all buried in or near Clonmacnois, we gather that they followed their famous brother; and it is possible that the seven churches founded there may have been presided over by the members of his family. Ciaran seems to have been always a studious lad, reading and practising writing on wax tablets even while he was herding cattle; and when he grew old enough, he begged his parents to send him to Clonard to learn wisdom. He asked his mother to give him a cow to take as a gift to the monastery, but she refused. However, a favorite cow with its calf followed him, and would not be parted from him, and by its milk a large number of Ciaran's companions were fed. The skin of this faithful dun cow is with us to this day, and has had a curious history. When Ciaran left Clonard to establish his own monastery of Clonmacnois, though he did not take the dun cow with him, he arranged that her skin should be sent after him when she died. Tradition connects this skin with a famous book, called The Book of the Dun, or in Irish, "Leabhar na h-Uidhre," all books at that time being written on parchment made out of skins of animals. In this book were written down many of the famous old stories of

Ireland, stories which in those days were known to every Irish child and every old man too. The book was written about the year 1100, by a brother of Clonmacnois, and we have it still with us, kept carefully in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin. It is the very oldest book written in Irish that exists, and it is named from St. Ciaran's pet cow, from whose skin it was believed to be made. There was a curious idea in St. Ciaran's time and long afterwards that whoever died lying on this skin would go to heaven, and on this account it was carefully preserved. No doubt the monks in later days thought this a foolish superstition, and so the skin or parchment was made into this book, which is now eight hundred years old.

The students at Clonard had no easy life. Ciaran had to take his turn with the rest in grinding corn at the mill, and carrying the sacks to and fro, in reaping the fields and in nursing the sick and lepers. All had to grind corn in the quern, even those who became great teachers and saints afterwards, like Ciaran or Columcille. Besides this there were the Psalms and Offices to be said day and night. But still Ciaran loved best of all to get quietly away and study. You remember that it was he who was reading St. Matthew's Gospel when Ninnid, the new boy, came to borrow his book from him. He and Ninnid became friends, and it was with him that he left the dun cow as a keepsake when he went to Clonmacnois.

The love between Finnian and his promising pupil was very great, and the account of their parting when Ciaran's school days were at an end is touching. Ciaran offered that any monastery he might build should be under the authority of St. Finnian, as one of the adjuncts to Clonard. But the master would not hear of such an arrangement, which would have robbed Clonmacnois of its importance and independence. "Nay," he said, "do not lay thy monastery under any other than thyself but God alone, who has bestowed special affection on thee beyond us all. Rather my monastery do I give to thee," said Finnian. Ciaran burst into tears, so touched was he that his master should offer to him, a youth, the charge of his great foundation. When Finnian saw that, he said, " Let there then be unity between us and our monasteries for ever, and he who will spoil this union, let him be deprived of life here and hereafter." "That shall be so," said Ciaran.

The monastic rule of life seems to have varied to a certain extent in the different foundations, according to the inclination of the founder. A monastery at Clonenagh in Queen's Co., founded by St. Fintan, seems to have been especially severe. The monks were not allowed to have any animals, or ever to eat meat. Even milk and butter were not permitted, and if offered, had to be refused. So stern was the discipline, that the neighbouring clerics, feeling the life of these monks a reproach to them, met in council, and

begged Fintan, for the love of God, to relax the extreme rigour of his rule. After much persuasion, he made some changes for the brethren, but continued the same way of life for himself.

We are so fortunate as still to possess the "Rule" of St. Columba. The day is divided into three parts. "Three labours of the day," it says, "prayer, work and reading. The work to be divided into three parts; first, thy own necessary work and the work of thy dwelling; secondly, thy share of the brethren's work; lastly, to help the neighbours by instruction, by writing, by sewing garments, or whatever labour they may be in need of." There was only one other monastery in Ireland that ranked equally with Clonard as a school of instruction, that of Bangor, Co. Down. Both were wasted and destroyed by the Danes. They found Clonard worth pillaging no less than five times; fourteen times it was in flames, until in 1045 A.D., having been burned three times in one week, it fell to rise no more.

St. Finnian, as we saw, died in 562 of the Yellow Plague, which decimated Europe, and extended itself over and over again to Ireland. He lived a hard life, as did many of the early monks. He fed on barley-bread and water, except on Sundays and holydays, when he allowed himself a bit of wheaten bread and a piece of broiled salmon and one single cup of mead or ale. He slept on the bare ground with a stone for his

pillow. So great was his meagreness and wretchedness that his ribs could be counted through his garment. He is said to have worn an iron girdle round his body, which cut him to the bone. The love of his followers ascribed his death of the Plague to the voluntary substitution of himself for the people of the Gael, so that they might not all perish of the terrible disease.

CHAPTER XV.

ST. BRIGIT, "THE MARY OF THE GAEL," DIED 525.

Authorities —Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes; Alex. Carmichael's "Carmina Gadelica."

THERE was great honour given to women in the early Celtic Church. We find more than one case in which a woman was Abbess of a large and important monastery in which not only nuns, but monks, dwelled and worked together. The first of these was St. Brigit, or Breed, who founded the monastery of Kildare, and who on account of her humility and gentleness was called the "Mary of the Gael." Brigit was the child of a poor slave-girl, who was sold from one master to another, and who was serving in the house of a heathen wizard or druid of Connaught when her child was born. Her father lived in Leinster. She grew up a very gentle maiden not quite like other children, for she could not eat the food that the wizard gave her, but fed on milk alone. She lived much out of doors, and loved to tend the sheep on the hillsides. She loved the birds, and fed them every day, and whenever she saw a poor child, she would give it food and milk. Even the hungry dogs would come to her to be fed. She was very helpful to her poor slave-mother and aided her in

all her work, not unwillingly, but with gladness and readiness. Her mother lived in a mountain dairy, with twelve cows in her charge; it was her work to milk them and churn the butter for her master. Once she fell ill, and could churn no more, but Brigit went about doing all that she had seen her mother do, and setting the dairy to rights. But ever, as she worked, she thought of the poor who had no share, and when the churning was done, she divided most of the butter into twelve portions, in honour of the Lord's twelve apostles. But a thirteenth portion she made larger than the rest, for she said, "This is Christ's portion, and is to be given to His poor," for she used to say when a faithful poor man asked for milk or food "It is Christ who has come." The boy who looked after the cattle saw that she gave to the poor. "Why do you not store up the butter, as every other dairy-maid does?" he asked. "It is hard for me," said Brigit, "to take His own food from Christ." Then the boy went and complained to the wizard and his wife, that their butter was being given away. They took a great hamper with them, empty, to be filled with butter, and went to the dairy. Brigit made them welcome, and washed their feet and gave them food. The wife said to Brigit, "We are come to see how everything has prospered with thee. How much butter hast thou?" Brigit went into her kitchen to fetch the butter, and she sang as she went a little song that she

had thought of, and which she always sang when she was churning—

"My kitchen
Where the pure God loves to dwell,
A kitchen which my King hath blessed,
A kitchen that hath butter.

Mary's Son, my holy Friend,
Comes to bless my kitchen;
Lo! the Prince of all the World
Comes to bless my churning."

Then she went back with half a churning in her hand, singing all the while. "This will not go far to fill my hamper," cried the wizard's wife. But Brigit kept going back and forwards, bringing more butter and more, and singing all the while. And at last the hamper was so well-filled, that the wizard said, "Thine shall be the kine which thou hast milked; and thou shalt serve me no longer, but the Lord only." "Take back the kine," said Brigit, "and give me instead my mother's freedom; for she hath a disease in her eyes and is going blind, and she can no longer serve you." "Your mother shall have her freedom," said the wizard, "and you can still have the kine, and I will do what you desire." Brigit most desired that her master should become a Christian, and he was baptised, and

followed the faith. And Brigit divided the kine amongst the poor and needy.

Brigit's troubles, however, were not over. She took her mother with her and went to seek her father, whom she had never known, in Leinster. He was a very rich man, but selfish and grasping, and when Brigit began to give away some of his goods to the poor and sick, as she had been accustomed to do, he was so wrath, that he took her with him to the king's fortress, and offered to sell her as a slave. The king sent for her out of the chariot, and asked her why she wished to give so much away? Then Brigit said: "The Virgin's Son knoweth that if I had thy power and all thy wealth, and if Leinster belonged to me, I should wish to give it all away to the Lord of Heaven and Earth." The king was so struck by her answer that he refused to buy her into slavery.

When she was eighteen years of age, Brigit desired to become a nun, and she went with seven other maidens to take the veil from Bishop Mel. The bishop was rejoiced to see her, for he had known her mother. She stayed, in her humility, behind the other virgins, so that she might take the veil last, but the bishop called her forward. It was not as a nun that he ordained her, but he read over her the form for consecrating a bishop. Another bishop, who was present, objected, saying that no woman had ever been ordained a bishop, but Mel said that this honour should be given

to Brigit alone among women. Her successors in the Abbacy were always accorded the honour due to a bishop. Afterward, Bishop Mel preached to the eight virgins on the eight beatitudes of the Gospel (*Matt.* v.), and each chose one of the beatitudes to be her special grace. Brigit chose the beatitude of mercy, and indeed this was the grace which especially shone in her life. Though she was often so poor that when strangers came to her monastery she hardly could find food to set before them, she never refused to give to those in want. She was specially pitiful to the lepers, of whom there were at that time very many in Ireland, and she became so skilled in treating their diseases that lepers and blind folk came over from Britain to be helped and cured by her. One day two blind men and a leper came thus over the sea and arrived at the door while Mass was being celebrated. Brigit sent them word to wait until the celebration was over. But they were impatient. "You healed your own folk yesterday," they said, "but you keep us waiting to-day." Soon Brigit came to them, and she tended them, and they went away much better. Leprosy was so foul a disease that few people would do anything for the unfortunates who were afflicted with it, or could bear to touch them, but this noble woman thought only that she was serving Christ in ministering to them. One Maundy Thursday Brigit was staying at a certain church. The prioress bade her maidens minister

to the old men and to the weak and feeble persons who were biding in the church. But not one of them would go. Then Brigit said, "I will myself minister to them to-day." There were waiting a consumptive man, and a lunatic, and a blind man and a leper. And Brigit tended them all in turn, binding up their wounds and healing them. There never was anybody sad but that she helped and comforted them, and this is why she is so loved and is called the "Mary of the Gael." We may all be thankful that there are now no lepers in these countries; at nearly every monastery in the old days there was a hospital for lepers, and it was the merciful duty of some of the monks to attend on them. There is a place near Dublin called Leperstown (now changed to "Leopardstown,") where the property was appropriated to the support of a leper hospital, built where Mercer's Hospital now stands; and even St. James' Palace in London was built over the site of an ancient leper hospital dedicated to St. James.

St. Brigit herself suffered from a similar disease of the eyes to that her mother had; perhaps she caught it from one of the blind men she tended. She was so ill one day, and her head so weary, that Bishop Mel insisted that she should go and seek a physician. But as they were on the way, Brigit fell from the chariot in her weakness, and her head struck against a stone, and she was terribly wounded and bleeding. It

happened that the doctor whom they were seeking came up at the time. He was both a bishop and a physician, with a special renown for curing headaches. He doctored Brigit, and in time healed her. You see that though Brigit was a holy woman and one of the saints of Ireland, she had her troubles like other people, and bore them bravely and patiently, thinking little of herself, but much of all other sufferers. No doubt her own troubles made her more tender towards the sick and sad. Yet she loved all that was fair and beautiful, though she did not turn away from the ugly and miserable. She had a great love for flowers, and once when she was wending her way through the Curragh, then a wide, delightful plain near the Liffey, covered with clover-blossom, she exclaimed, "Were this lovely plain my own, how gladly would I offer it to the Lord of Heaven and Earth." It was on this beautiful plain that she chose to build her monastery. She was tending her sheep once on the Curragh while she was still young, when a little boy, who had not long begun to study, came running by. His name was Ninnid, and he was born in the Island of Mull, in Scotland. "What makes thee in such haste, O little scholar?" said Brigit, "and what art thou seeking?" "O nun," said the scholar, "I am going to heaven." "Happy is he who goes that journey," said Brigit, "and for God's sake, pray for me that it may be easy for me to go." "O nun," said the scholar, "I have no

leisure; for the gates of heaven are open now, and I fear they may be shut against me. Pray the Lord that it may be easy for me to go to heaven, and I will pray the Lord for thee, that it may be easy for thee, and that thou mayest bring many thousands with thee to heaven." Then they said a Pater Noster, or the Lord's Prayer, together. He grew up to be a holy man, and he gave to Brigit the communion and sacrifice when she was dying. He was called Ninnid the Pure-handed, and though he was at Rome when Brigit was dying, he came home on purpose to be with her at the last.

St. Brigit now became very well-known for her holy life and her merciful deeds, and she was honoured wherever she went. Once she attended a synod, and all who were present rose up as she entered. And many gathered round her to learn from her, so that she felt the time was come to erect her monastery.

She went to Bishop Mel and asked him to mark out the place where she should build it. Just as they were come to the place where Kildare stands to-day, a number of horseloads of peeled rods were passing by. Brigit sent her maidens to ask the owner, Ailill, King of Leinster, whether he would give some of them to help to build the monastery. At first he refused roughly, but when one of the horses stumbled and fell under its load, he relented, and gave them as many wattles and stakes of wood as they needed. Indeed

Ailill, the owner of the horses, became so interested in the building, that he undertook to feed the builders, and pay their wages. In this monastery Brigit did a great work; and her work and her fame went forth not only over Ireland, but through Scotland as well. She is well-known all over the islands and western coasts of Scotland, and whenever the harvest is good, or there are plenty of fish in the seas, the poor people say that it is St. Brigit that sends them. On one of the Hebrides, they make a figure out of a sheaf of oats each spring, and they carry it from house to house, and the mistress rises up and says three times, "Breed (Brigit) is come"; for they believe that she will bring them plenty in the autumn. With her white wand she is said to breathe life into the mouth of the dead winter, and to bring him to open his eyes to the tears and the smiles, the sighs and laughter of spring. Her day is the first of February, the beginning of spring.

She is the saint of all young girls who perform humble and lowly duties; for she rose early, herded the sheep, milked the cows and churned the butter, and yet when doing these lowly acts she never forgot that she was serving God. Even when she was at meals, she had a reader who read to her the Psalms. Here is what one old writer says of Breed: "It was this Brigit who did not take her mind or her attention from the Lord for the space of one hour at any time, but was constantly speaking of Him, and ever constantly think-

ing of Him. She was very hospitable and very charitable to guests and to all needy people. She was humble and attended to the herding of sheep and early rising, as the song says—

"The blessed Brigit loved
Constant piety, constant humility,
Sheep-herding, early rising,
Hospitality to all good men."

CHAPTER XVI.

HERMIT MONKS, ANCHORITES, ENCLOSED MONKS AND CULDEES.

Authorities:—Lives of the Saints from the Book of Lismore. Ware's Annals and Antiquities of Ireland. For Marianus Scotus, see the Codex Palatino-Vaticanus, No. 830, edited by Rev. B. MacCarthy, D.D. (Todd Lecture Series, Vol. III.) For the Culdees, Bishop Reeves' work on that subject, and the Annals of the Four Masters, &c. For St. Angus the Culdee, see "The Felire of Angus," edited by Dr. Whitley Stokes; O'Hanlon's "Lives of the Saints"; Dictionary of National Biography, &c. The traditions of the Life of Angus are later and therefore less reliable than those we have hitherto dealt with.

We have hitherto spoken of the monks who lived in communities. These communities were almost like little cities, and indeed they generally went by that name. The monastery of Kildare was called the "city" of Brigit; Clonmacnois the "city" of Ciaran, and so on. They were the only towns that existed in those days. Each of them was, as we said, formed of groups of huts, built round one or more tiny churches, which were increased in number as the city grew in size. All round the group was a wall, which kept them together. Sometimes, as at Glendalough, the huts extended down the whole side of the valley, sometimes they were built round a central green. Those that were built in the

forests had large clearings made all round, and these were used as farms on which the monks worked, and from which the corn and vegetables needed were raised. In a little island like Iona, with a large monastic population, they could not raise nearly enough produce on the island itself, so they cultivated also the neighbouring thinly-inhabited islands, Mull and Islay, and we often hear of the monks going backwards and forwards in their fragile skin boats or coracles, much like those still in use on the western coasts of Ireland and Scotland. The kiln, the mill, the bake-house, were all within the monastic wall or "cashel," so that you see the establishments were really like small towns or villages, with their schools, their churches, all complete. When the Northmen came to Ireland, they found no regular towns to attack, but they found all over Ireland these settlements, with their large populations, so they naturally attacked these. They were often burned to the ground by the Norse, but being so simply built, they were speedily erected again as soon as the foreigners moved on to another place. If you did not understand this you would be puzzled to hear later on that Clonmacnois and Armagh and Clonard and other monasteries were burned down over and over again, sometimes several times in one year.

But all the Irish monks did not live in communities. Many preferred a solitary existence, living quite alone on some island in a lake or on some rocky and desert

place on the coast or in the ocean. This kind of life was very common, and even busy men like St. Columcille or St. Finnian had solitary cells in lonely places to which they could retire at times to think and pray. It was no doubt for the same reason that St. Columcille's successors and St. Kevan built the little chambers in the roofs of their oratories, where, when the ladder was drawn up, no one could reach them to disturb them. St. Kevan had also a cave, to which he used to retire, overhanging the Upper Lake of Glendalough, which can only be approached by water, and which is barely large enough to lie down in. These places of retirement were very good for men so hard-worked, and who had the charge of important duties. Many, however, who adopted the hermit life never returned again to dwell among men.

The austerities practised by these early monks were often of the most severe and terrible kind. It was a usual custom for them to recite the daily Psalms standing up to the waist or neck immersed in the cold water of a stream or lake; sometimes we read of them breaking the ice in order to be able to do so. Many of them never lay down on any other bed but the bare earth, with a stone for a pillow, or on the hard floor of their narrow cells. There was a monk who in a fit of penitence for "having murmured a little against God" bound his right hand to his leg with an iron lock and threw away the key into the river. There was a monk who wore a

girdle of iron which cut into the bone; another who was seven years suspended on iron bars; and many who lived on such miserably insufficient food that their bones could be seen almost piercing their skin.

I want now to tell you about a form of austerity which was kept up in Ireland until comparatively modern times. The monks who practised it were called "enclosed monks," and the cells in which they lived were called "prisons of narrow enclosure." We read of several of the old monks who lived in small stone cells or prisons no higher than themselves, and sometimes they did not stir out of these cells for years. There were several in succession at the monastery of Clonmacnois. At Fore, in Westmeath, there may still be seen an old church to which the hermitage of a professed anchorite was attached up to the year 1660. He lived in a cell so low and narrow, that a tall man could not lie full length on the floor. On entering, he took a vow never to leave his cell again, and his only recreation was to walk on the stone above his head, if it could be said that to move a couple of steps up and down was walking. This monk attracted so much attention that the people round called him the "Holy Man in the Stone."

The cell of an "enclosed monk" was usually built into or beside a church, with a window between, so that the monk could join in the service without moving from his cell. At St. Doulough's Church, near Malahide,

Co. Dublin, there was such a cell, which may still be seen, though nothing is known of St. Doulough himself. The monk, on entering, was solemnly set apart by a special service for the life of an "incluse" or enclosed monk; he was then built up on the side on which he had entered, and was fed through an opening that was left. Here he lived, and here he often died. But all the monks of those days were, as we shall see, great wanderers, and even men with a passion for the life of an enclosed monk did not always care to stay at home in Ireland. There were Irish monasteries all over the continent, founded by wandering Irish monks and missionaries, and sometimes a monk from Ireland, instead of shutting himself up at home, went abroad to do so. Now it is very interesting to find that these monks sometimes kept diaries, and that one of these diaries has come down to us written by the very hand of the incluse himself. It may be said that an enclosed monk could not find much to put into his diary, but there are plenty of interesting things in the diary of Marianus Scotus, enclosed monk in the Abbey of Fulda, and afterwards of Mayence, in Germany. In Irish the name of Marianus was Maelbrigte, which was changed in Latin into Marianus. He came from the North of Ireland, and was born about 1028 A.D. He was educated in Moville Monastery, Co. Down, but four years after his entrance we find that he left the monastery, and set out as a

pilgrim to the Irish Abbey of St. Martins at Cologne. For two years he remained there, going through the long probation that preceded the immuring of a monk in an enclosed cell. The arrangement abroad seems to have been somewhat different to that in Ireland. The incluse had his cell in a small space enclosed by a wall. Beneath the cell, according to the singularly unpleasant custom of incluses, his predecessors had been buried, so that Marianus daily said Mass standing over the graves of other monks who had lived there before him and with his own grave open beside him. The enclosed monks were always buried beneath the spot on which they died, so that the cell must literally have been filled and heightened by the bodies of the previous occupants. Outside the enclosure were cells for students and disciples, for the incluse was expected to teach; while they, in return, supplied him with necessaries. After a prolonged and solemn service or requiem, as for the dead, the novice was conducted to his cell, which was then built up. There was as regular a Rule for solitary monks as for any others; it contained sixty-nine chapters of directions which they were bound to observe. They seem to have possessed books and papers, even when they had only the bare necessaries of life, for they were expected to be able to reply to inquirers, and confute Jews and unbelievers by their writings, so that they must have been learned men. Marianus did even more than this, for

he composed an important History of the World which was used by later historians in writing their works. His reputation for learning spread, and when Siegfried, the Superior of Fulda Abbey, came in 1058 A.D. to visit Cologne, he induced Marianus to return with him and take up his residence at Fulda. On his way he paid a visit to the ruins of an Irish abbey at Paderborn, where a great event in the world of Irish monks had just taken place. The city of Paderborn had been destroyed by fire, and two abbeys, filled with Irish monks, had been burned to the ground. In one of these was an Irish incluse, named Padernus. He had, it seems, predicted the fire, and when it came, nothing would induce him to fly from his cell. Alone of all the monks he remained and was burned to death. Marianus, as we may imagine, was much interested in the fate of his fellow-incluse, and he turned aside to visit Paderborn. He tells us that he prayed on the mattress from which Padernus had passed to his rest, though how the mattress escaped the fire which consumed its occupant he does not say. Perhaps Padernus was carried out of the flames and laid on the mattress before his death.

Within a year Marianus received priest's orders at Würzburg, and he became for the second time a professed incluse on the Friday after Ascension, May 14, 1059, taking up his abode in a cell in which another Irish incluse had died sixteen years before. He after-

wards followed his friend Bishop Siegfried to Mayence and was again enclosed there, remaining solitary until his death thirteen years afterwards. He was only fifty-four years old when he died.

There was another class of monks or lay-brothers who did a most useful, although a most humble, work in their respective monasteries. These monks or lay-brothers were called Culdees, that is 'Servants of God' (Célé-Dé). To almost every monastery was attached a hospital for the sick, the poor, and the lepers. I told you that the care of lepers was so distasteful that few could be found to undertake it. There is a story in St. Brigit's life which shows us that the lepers even despised each other. Two lepers were being washed and treated for their sickness by Brigit, and through her care and skill one of them was cured. She bade him out of gratitude to wash and bind up the other leper. But he angrily refused. "What, O nun," he cried, "dost thou deem it just that I, a healthy man, with my fresh limbs and my fresh raiment, should wash yon loathsome leper there? A duty like that is not fit for me." So Brigit was herself obliged to wash the miserable man, whom his selfish companion refused to aid. The Culdees gave themselves up to these lowly and disagreeable duties. They lived in the hospitals, and tended the sick. There was such a hospital at Armagh, and another at Clonmacnois, standing a little separated from the main build-

ings. At Clonmacnois the head of the Culdees was at one time called Conn-of-the-Poor, because of his work amongst them, and one of his family was the scribe who wrote the Book of the Dun, of which we spoke before.

In the year 921 A.D., when the Danes came down to pillage Armagh, they found the little hospital of sick and poor, and they spared the Culdees who ministered in it. We have a large book still in existence which was written by a famous Culdee, named Angus, who lived about 800 A.D. It gives the names of almost all the saints who were known to the Irish monks at the time. It is said that when Angus was a young man, as he was travelling past a place called Coolbanagher, in Queen's Co., he had a vision of angels surrounding a certain tomb in the churchyard there. He asked who had been buried in that grave? "A poor old man who formerly lived in the place," they reply. "What good did he do?" said Angus. "I saw no particular good in him," said the priest, who was present, "except that it was his custom to recount and invoke the saints of the world, so far as he could remember them, at going to bed and getting up." "Ah," said Angus, "he who should make a poem in praise of all the saints would doubtless have a high reward, if the angels took account of this poor man." And he determined to compose a long poem, putting in it all the names of saints whom he could hear of. He set himself

earnestly to study, and in course of time became celebrated for his learning, and for his preaching, which attracted great attention wherever he went. Angus was a very humble man and disliked fame and praise, so one day, when people were beginning to trouble him by flocking round to hear his sermons, he disguised himself and came to the gate of a monastery at Tallaght, near Dublin, and humbly begged to be admitted as a lay brother. He said he wished for employment as a serving-man. He cheerfully undertook the most laborious offices, and was engaged in field-labour and the farm-yard. He bore the sheaves on his back in the harvest-time, and threshed out the grain, carrying the sacks to the granary and the mill. One day he was chopping wood in Glenasmoil, when he cut his hand, and the birds, who loved him for his gentle ways, crowded round and uttered sharp cries.

He remained unknown for seven years, but at last his secret came out. It happened in this way. He was sitting one day at work in the monastery barn, when he heard a child sobbing. He found that it was a little scholar from the monastery school hiding behind the straw, and very frightened at being discovered. He had not properly learned his lesson, and was afraid to go to school. He begged Angus not to send him to his master, but to hide him in the barn. Angus was sorry for the child, for he had really tried to learn his lesson, but he was not a clever boy, and the lesson was hard

and as fast as he tried to learn one part he forgot another. Angus took him in his arms and comforted him, and after a while the child forgot his trouble and fell asleep. Angus sang the lesson over and over softly while the child was dozing, and talked to him about it gently, so that presently the child stood up and could repeat it perfectly from beginning to end.* Angus then sent him to the teacher, who was so surprised at the way the ordinarily stupid pupil repeated his lesson, that he obliged him to tell how he had learned it. "He who has taught this child his lesson cannot be a mere servant-man," thought the Abbot, and it flashed across his mind that it must be the monk Angus, who had disappeared suddenly from the church and all his friends no less than seven years ago, and who had never since been heard of. He ran to the barn, embracing Angus with tender affection, but reproaching him for having through false humility deprived them all of his learning and experience for so long a time. They became bosom friends, and Angus returned to his literary work. He was a learned man, for he knew Latin and probably Greek as well; and he wrote several books and other shorter works. An old

* The legend actually says that the child fell asleep on the knee of Angus, and when he awoke he knew his lesson perfectly, but there is no need to add or detract from the simple story told by the child himself to his Superior.

writer, in a poem written in praise of Angus the Culdee calls him, on account of his learning, "The bright Sun of the Western World."

CHAPTER XVII.

FOREIGN WORK OF THE IRISH CHURCH.

For St. Fridolin, O'Hanlon's "Lives of the Saints." His "Acts" were preserved in a monastery founded by him on the Moselle, and were copied by a monk named Baltherus of Seckingen in the twelfth century. As a veritable fever for "discovering," the lives of famous saints arose in the twelfth century, however, these late lives must be received with caution. The outline of St Fridolin's life is, nevertheless, apparently authentic. For St. Columban, Miss Margaret Stokes' "Six months in the Apennines," and her "Forests of France," give an interesting resumé of the Saint's life, as written by monk Jonas of Bobio. Miss Stokes adds much information about the monasteries founded by Columban, which she personally visited.

One of the most remarkable features of the Celtic Church, and especially of the Irish branch of it, was the love of the monks for wandering through Europe. One of their own historians, St. Gildas, writes: "To voyage over seas, and to pace over broad tracts of land was not so much a weariness as a delight." "Most of them," says another old writer, "seem born under a wandering planet." All over Europe we find the monasteries that they built, and the churches and bishoprics that they founded, from Iceland in the North to Italy in the South. The story of the lives and work of these missionaries would take many an hour to tell, but we will talk of one of them, who was called, from his love of

roaming, St. Fridolin "the Wanderer." His life was supposed to have been lost, but a monk who visited one of the monasteries which he had founded on the Moselle in Switzerland, is said to have found a copy of it. He was not allowed to carry it away, but during his stay he studied it so carefully, that he remembered it well and wrote it down afterwards. All of it may not be correct, but there is no doubt that much of it is true. St. Fridolin seems to have been born in Connaught, but in what year is not known. He was nobly born and was a very learned man, having studied Greek and the Greek philosophers in Ireland as well as the ordinary subjects which all students were taught. He was ordained deacon, and afterwards priest, and was an eloquent preacher. He travelled throughout Ireland, but as his talents became widely known, he was received everywhere with such honour that he felt disturbed, and anxious to get away into a quieter life. So he distributed his possessions to the poor and to his friends, and after a fatiguing journey reached the sea coast, where he took ship and finally landed in Gaul or France. He was kindly received by a man of good family and remained to recruit his strength. He heard that many of the people in the outlying villages were still heathens, so he began to move from place to place, preaching as he went. At last he reached Poitiers, and here he entered the monastery of St. Hilary, and remained many years. So struck were the brethren

with his piety and austerities, that he was elected Abbot when a vacancy occurred some time afterwards.

But he did not remain all his life at Poitiers. He was warned that he must push on to Germany, for in a dream he had seen an island in the Rhine which was to be the site of his own monastery. He did not know where it was, but he set out to find the island. The King of France, who esteemed him greatly, promised that if he could find such an island as he had seen in his dream, it should be granted to him. He wandered north-east towards the Moselle, founding several churches on his way, and finally reached the place we now call Strasbourg, which was then a beautiful wooded country between the Vosges Mountains and the Rhine, without any towns. Here he stayed for some time and founded a monastery, which was long presided over by Irish abbots. But the thought of the island in the Rhine still haunted him, and he set forth again, travelling south through Burgundy, enquiring if an island, uninhabited and uncultivated, had been heard of. At last he was told that there was such an island at a place called Seckingen, a little east of Basle on the northern borders of Switzerland. He found it at last after great difficulties, and began to cut down some trees to build a church and cell. But the people took the travel-stained monk for a robber, and violently opposed him, driving him away with sticks. He barely escaped with his life, and their opposition obliged him

to go back to the King of France to get a charter bestowing on him the island. There were no posts in those days, and he had no one to send, so he was obliged to take this laborious journey on foot all over again. The king received him lovingly, and gave the land to him for ever by charter, and he sent an escort of soldiers back with him, who stayed beside him until his monastery was partly built, punishing the people of the place if his workmen were disturbed. The monastery was finally placed under the care of Pepin of Heristal, Mayor of the French palace.

In the building was, as usual, a school for boys, and attached to it was a Community of Canonesses. St. Fridolin was especially fond of the boys and joined in their games and amusements; his gentleness endeared him to them, and by degrees won the confidence of the inhabitants. He wrote many books and wandered over Switzerland preaching to the people. Through his instructions the inhabitants of the canton of Glarus were brought to Christ. On the banner of Glarus there still waves the figure of the Irish saint. The canton of St. Gall, as we shall see presently, was converted by another Irishman of that name, and there was a very important Irish monastery there. The canton of Glarus was formerly subject to the Abbess of Seckingen, and the abbey exercised a wide temporal as well as spiritual influence, and it was afterwards richly endowed by the nobles and pupils. It was a

regular stopping-place for Irish pilgrims to Rome in the middle ages. In those days there were no hotels, but every monastery had a guest-house, and Irish visitors were no doubt especially welcomed. They stopped first at Seckingen, then at St. Gall, and thence they passed over the Alps to find themselves welcomed in another Irish monastery in North Italy, called Bobio, built high up on the slopes of the Apennines, so that all along their journey, which they often had to make on foot, they found friends and compatriots.

I want to tell you a little about the founder of Bobio. We do not know the date of St. Fridolin the Wanderer, except that he lived in the reign of the French King Clovis or one of his dynasty. But of the founder of Bohio, St. Columban or Columbanus, we fortunately know the whole history, and a very interesting history it is. He was born about 543, twenty-two years after St. Columba or Columcille, and his name is so like his, that people have often confused the two together and wondered how St. Columba, who was busy in Scotland, could have established several foreign monasteries also. They were, however, quite distinct, although they lived about the same time and must probably have known each other, at least by repute. St. Columban was born in the west of Leinster, and was educated at a little school in Cleenish Island in Lough Erne, near Enniskillen, by a saint who was himself a disciple of St. Finnian of Clonard. Thence he went to study at Bangor, in Co. Down,

which was then growing into fame under St. Comgall, its founder, the friend and companion of St. Columcille. But the heart of the young scholar turned to missionary work, and he constantly thought he heard a voice saying to him as it said to Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." Comgall, who loved him, begged him not to go, but when he found that his heart was fixed on his mission, he not only sent him forth, but gave him twelve monks to be his companions, one of whom was St. Gall, who founded the monastery in Switzerland of which we have spoken. Several of the others became earnest missionaries, and spread the knowledge of the Gospel in various parts of Europe. St. Columban was thirty years old when they set forth, and he visited Scotland and England on the way, perhaps calling to see his great namesake at Iona. Here and there as they went they stopped to preach, and finally they passed over to Gaul. This little band of monks, clad in coarse woollen garments over a white tunic, with their hair tonsured from ear to ear across the front of the head and flowing locks behind, after the Irish custom, excited great wonder and attention wherever they went. In their hands they carried long staves, and on their backs or hanging from their sides were leathern water-bottles, wallets for food, writing-tablets, and relic-cases. They spoke a language that the people had

never heard before, and they seemed to possess no money, and to want none. When asked who they were and whence they came, they replied: "We are Irish, dwelling in the very ends of the earth. We be men who received nought beyond the doctrine of the evangelists and apostles. The Catholic faith, as first delivered by the successors of the Holy Apostles, is still maintained among us with unchanged fidelity." "I am a Scottish (*i.e.*, Irish) pilgrim," said Columban another time, "and my speech and actions correspond to my name, which in Latin is Columba, 'a dove.'" This was indeed true, for it was as much by the gentleness and humility of their lives as by their preaching that these missionaries won the wild peoples among whom they came to Christ. When the people of Gaul saw that they asked for nothing for themselves but a spot on which to erect a wicker hut and food enough to eat, and that they laboured all day in a foreign land and among unfriendly people to teach and heal and civilise them, they were at length softened and touched, and they began to listen to what was said. Meanwhile, no doubt, St. Columban and his followers were learning their language, for the people could not, of course, understand Irish, nor yet Latin, though the latter was the common language of the educated and of the monasteries.

Gaul (*i.e.*, France,) was at this time in a terrible state of confusion. It was governed by

three brothers, who ruled over different parts, and who were always quarrelling with each other. Though the country was nominally Christian, these kings were evil and cruel, and their wives seem to have been even more wicked than themselves. Before one of the kings, Sigebert, Columban presented himself, as he seemed more inclined than the others to listen to the rebukes and exhortations of the preacher. He finally offered to give the saint whatever he asked for, if he would stay with him and help him rule and reform his kingdom. But Columban replied, "Know, O king, that those things which are in your power to bestow do not attract me, for in these things there is nothing to satisfy the heart of myself or my companions. We are followers of Jesus Christ, Who has plainly said, 'Whosoever will be My disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.' We seek no comforts, nor to dwell on fertile lands, nor to gratify the flesh. We seek for solitude, and some secluded place, wherein to live in penitence and in devotion to God." "It is well," said the king, "in this also I can please you. There is a wide uninhabited district in my territory; I will make it yours. Only I pray of you not to leave my country." So Columban settled down in the vast solitudes of the Vosges forests, on the borders of Alsace and Burgundy, the district afterwards passed through by St. Fridolin on his way to Switzerland.

At a place called Annegray, they found an old ruined

castle, surrounded by woods, and steep, almost inaccessible, rocks. Under its shade they decided to erect their simple monastery, and here they lived chiefly on the wild fruits and herbs, often nearly starving for want of food. The wild beasts of the forest came to know Columban: the birds would settle on his hands, and the squirrels run down from the tree-tops to take shelter beneath his cowl. Even a wolf, who lived in a cave high up on the rocks which Columban wished to make his place of retirement, gave up its den to him, and neither hurt nor disturbed him when he rested and prayed there. Here he composed the rule for his monks, and ordained that their garment should be white, to remind them of the purity that should adorn their lives. But his rule was very severe; harder to keep, indeed, than any other rule that was ever made, and the monks were cruelly punished, even with beatings, if they transgressed in the least point. No doubt this was one reason that the Columban Rule did not long continue; few men could support such a rigid system, with so many privations and punishments. Yet at first the gentleness of the monks won many adherents, and by degrees richer men came to their aid, and relieved their necessities. They began to cultivate the ground and plant crops, so that they did not always suffer from actual need as they did at first. "Whosoever overcomes himself," Columban was wont to say, "treads the world underfoot. If

Christ be in us, we cannot live unto ourselves; if we have conquered ourselves we have conquered all things; if the Creator of all things died for us while yet in our sins, ought not we to die to sin? Let us live in Christ that Christ may live in us."

Two important monasteries were the fruit of Columban's work in Gaul, the monastery of Fontaines and that of Luxeuil, and then there came a time when he passed on to other work, in other fields of labour. The cause of this change was the hatred of the wicked queen-mother, who wished to keep her son, who was young, in her own power, and who feared that the good influence of St. Columban would strengthen him and weaken her own authority. So she forbade anyone to go to the monastery or to have any dealings with Columban. An officer and band of soldiers were sent to arrest him. They found him chanting the service in church. "Man of God," they said, "we pray you to obey the king's orders and return whence you came." "No," answered the monk; "I have left my country for the service of Jesus Christ, and I cannot think that He desires me to return." Columban was arrested, sent across France to the sea, and put on board a ship at Nantes bound for Ireland. But a violent storm drove the vessel back to the French coast. The captain, who was a superstitious man, thought that the monks he carried had brought him ill-luck, and he landed them all at the mouth of the Loire,

and then continued his voyage. So Columban was free once more, though in the midst of enemies. He was sheltered for a time by a friendly king of another division of France, but he disliked the luxury and vice of the court, and though the king listened respectfully when he rebuked him, Columban felt ill at ease. He longed for a simpler and quieter life.

Soon an opportunity came. His learning and powers were now widely known, and he was sent for to Italy, to exert the force of his pen and his preaching against an unorthodox form of belief called Arianism which had taken root there, and which had affected the King of Milan, who had not long been baptised into the Christian faith. The Bishop of Milan was anxious for the help of St. Columban, of whose wonderful work in Gaul, and of whose courage he had often heard. He invited Columban to Milan. The saint was not permitted to pass through the territories from which he had been exiled; he had to go north and embark on the Rhine, and travel down the river through Basle to Lake Constance, and thence across the Alps into Italy. St. Gall was with him, but at Lake Constance he halted and said he would not go on into Italy, but would remain and preach in Switzerland. So these old and faithful friends parted, and the monastery of St. Gall was founded close beside the Lake of Constance. We cannot dwell upon the work of Columban in Italy. His writings and discussions

were successful, and for the time Arianism was nearly stamped out. But when his work was done, Columban begged to be allowed to retire once more into solitude, and the king, willing to help him in every way, gave him a grant of land on one of the most beautiful spots on the Apennines, and there the wandering missionary made his final home in the famous monastery of Bobio. We still possess a copy of the very grant made by King Agilulph to Columban, giving him the basilica at Bobio, with four miles round on every side, and half of a well, the use of the other half of which he had granted to a land-owner some time before. This well still exists in an ancient wall which formerly went round the monastery. One half was used by the monks from within the grounds, the other by the people of the town outside. There are other memorials of the saint at Bobio, a knife, a cup and a bell, like the little hand-bells used all over Ireland. But the most valuable memorial of Bobio is the splendid collection of books, or rather manuscripts, which formed its library. Numbers of these have been destroyed, for Bobio has suffered many vicissitudes, but some have been carried for safety to Milan, to Turin and to Rome, where they are carefully preserved in the great libraries.* Among them is an old service book which belonged to

* A few months ago the Library at Turin was partly destroyed by fire, but the valuable collection of Bobio manuscripts was rescued from the flames See chapter on Libraries, pp. 271-274.

the monastery of Bangor, in Ireland, and was probably carried to Bobio by a learned Irish professor who lectured at the University of Pavia, in Italy, in the ninth century. It is now at Milan. A beautiful hymn, still sung in the services of the Church, "Sancti venite, Christi corpus sumete," was found in it.* It is a very ancient Irish hymn, and it is so beautiful that a story arose about it having been heard by St. Patrick as he approached a church in which the Holy Offering was being made. But those who sang it were believed to be a choir not of men but of angels.

St. Columban and St. Fridolin were only two out of a great number of Irish teachers and saints who crossed over to Europe, but their story, which you have now heard, will help you to understand the lives and work of the others, for most of the Irish monasteries were bound under the Columban Rule. Irish men and women ought to find travelling in France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland or Italy very interesting, for almost wherever they go, they will find the names and traces of the early Irish missionaries.

* A translation of this hymn has been made by Dr. Neale. It begins:

"Draw nigh and take the Body of the Lord,
And drink the holy Blood for you outpoured."

CHAPTER XVIII.

ST. ADAMNAN, AND THE QUESTION OF CONFORMITY.

Authorities:—The Venerable Bede's Ecclesiastical History and Minor Works; Adamnan's Life of St. Columba, edited by Bishop Reeves; Fragmentary Annals of Mac Firbis, edited by O'Donovan. Piece called "The Boromhe," edited by S. H. O'Grady, and by Wh. Stokes.

THERE is one other saint of the Celtic Church whose life is so intimately connected with the secular and political history of his day that it would be impossible to overlook it. He belonged to a later period than St. Columcille, having been born about 624 A.D., and his later life was consecrated to an effort, which was finally successful, to bring the Celtic Church into complete conformity with the Roman Church, from which it differed on various points of discipline. Of this effort we shall have to speak in this chapter.

Adamnan is not now so well remembered as St. Columcille or several other original founders of monasteries, though in his lifetime he was looked upon as one of the foremost men of the age. This is probably due to the fact that most of his life was spent in Hi or Iona, the great monastery founded by St. Columcille in Scotland, of which he became the ninth Abbot in 679 A.D. The familiar clan system, in which the Irish and Scot-

tish chieftains had been reared, clung to the ecclesiastical order of things established in these Celtic monasteries, and the abbots were usually chosen from the same family as that of the founder. Most of the early abbots of Iona were of the same clan or family as St. Columcille himself.

Adamnan was, like his great predecessor, born in Donegal in the year 624 or thereabouts, and he was of the race of Conall. Only one story has come down to us about his early life, but it shows us that as a boy he had left home and gone to Meath for his education. It explains to us also how Adamnan, although he lived so much in Scotland, came to be sure a close friend of King Finnachta the Festive, who ruled Ireland during the chief part of Adamnan's public career.* The story is as follows. While Finnachta was still a private man, and before any thought of aspiring to the kingdom had come into his head, he was one day riding with a company of horsemen to see a sister of his who had bidden him to her house. As they rode along, they chanced upon Adamnan, who was then a little scholar, and who, with a vessel of milk on his back, happened to be coming up the same path. In his haste to get out of the way of the horsemen, he struck his foot against a stone and stumbled; and in doing so, the vessel fell from his back, and was broken to pieces. The boy burst into tears, but nevertheless he gathered

* See Chapter VII.

up the fragments, and ran along beside the horses, crying as he went.

When Finnachta saw him in tears, he laughed, and called to Adamnan to stop crying, for he would protect him from punishment, and excuse his mishap. Then the lad looked up in Finnachta's face and said, "I have good cause to grieve, fair sir, for there are three worthy students of theology who dwell in one house, and I and two other lads serve them. It is our custom each in turn to go abroad and seek provision for the other five. That which I have now gathered is spilled on the ground; but most of all, I grieve for the borrowed pitcher broken, for I have no means to make restitution for its loss." Finnachta said: "I will restore the broken pitcher; and do thou bring to the house whither I am bound the three students and their clerks, who are through thy misfortune this night foodless, and they shall have meat and drink." So they came that night, and a separate table was placed for the clergy to banquet at. Then he that was the instructor of Adamnan prophesied that in time to come Finnachta should be supreme king of Ireland, and Adamnan head of the saints of Ireland. And this afterwards fell out. The cleric said also that Adamnan should be the "soul-friend" (*i.e.*, the confessor and counsellor) of Finnachta, and that until he should offend Adamnan, he should greatly flourish.

This early meeting proved the beginning of what was

almost a life-long friendship, although it is difficult to understand what tie bound together the serious and energetic monk and the frivolous king. In after life he became, as the cleric had prophesied, the confessor of Finnachta, and his counsellor on several questions of great importance.

Adamnan had also another friend among the crowned heads of his day. The young Aldfrid or Alfrid of Northumbria, an illegitimate brother of Egfrid, who reigned 670-685 A.D., had not been allowed to succeed to the throne, although he was the elder of the two. Alfrid, who was of a studious disposition, so far from repining at his rejection by his people, gladly seized the opportunity to cross over to Ireland and, as the Venerable Bede tells us, to devote himself to literature, "suffering a voluntary exile to gratify his love of knowledge."*

According to the Irish accounts, his mother was an Irishwoman, of the house of Niall, and he may possibly have first met Adamnan in Donegal when both were young men. Her name was Fina, and from her the prince is familiarly known in Irish writings as Flann Fina. He seems to have travelled much through Ireland and to have loved the country, for there is a poem of his still extant describing the various provinces which

* Bede's "Life of St. Cuthbert," chap. xxiv.

he had visited, and what most struck him in each.*

He was recalled to the kingdom of Northumbria in 685 A.D., on the death of his brother Egfrid, who on an expedition against the Picts had been allured into the mountains and slain. He proved to be a noble and worthy king. Bede bestows on him the special praise which he is so often forced to give to those with whom he came in contact who had been reared in Ireland, that "he was most learned in the Scriptures," and he adds that "he nobly retrieved the ruined state of the kingdom, though confining it within narrower limits."† In a letter written to Bishop Egbert about thirty years after the death of Alfrid, the same writer deplores the evil condition of the country when Alfrid's restraining hand was removed. Alfrid or Flann Fina, as he ought to be styled in an Irish history, died one year after Adamnan (705). In the very year of his election to the kingdom of Northumbria, Adamnan had paid him a visit to ask him to set free some Irish prisoners carried captive from Meath by his brother the year before, a

* This poem, which is preserved in several manuscripts, is printed in Hardiman's Irish Minstrelsy. Mangan has made a metrical translation of it which begins :—

> I found in Innisfail the Fair,
> In Ireland, while in exile there,
> Women of worth, both grave and gay men,
> Many clerics and many laymen.

† Eccl. Hist., Bk. iv., chap. 26.

request which he nobly granted, giving Adamnan the joy of escorting back to Ireland sixty released captives.

This was only one of many visits which Adamnan paid to Ireland. On several occasions he took part in important synods, and there was a canon passed at one of these synods which is known by the name of the Lex Adamnain or Law of Adamnan. This most beneficient law released women from going out to war, as the Irish women had been accustomed to do from time immemorial.* It is said that one day as he was passing with his mother across a plain in Meath where some petty skirmish was going on, he saw two women tearing each other with reaping-hooks, although one of them had her babe at her breast. His mother was filled with horror at the sight, and she sat down on the ground and refused to move, until Adamnan had promised to use his utmost efforts to put an end to such disgusting scenes. He carried out his promise, and towards the close of his career the merciful law was passed exempting women from battle. It was high time that such a barbarous custom should be done away with. The synod at which this law was passed was held at Tara, where one of the raths is still known as the Rath of the Synods; within it are spots called the Tent and Chair of Adamnan,

* The law adds that the women were often driven to battle by their own husbands, who beat them forward in front of them with hedge-sticks.

showing the importance attached to the meeting in which he took part.

A very important synod was also held by him at Armagh, convened by Flann the Abbot of Armagh, which was attended by forty bishops and abbots. The great object to which the later life of Adamnan was consecrated was that of bringing the Celtic Church in Ireland into complete conformity to the discipline of the Catholic Church. Certain customs had been handed down in the British and Irish churches, and carried on in all the monasteries and churches founded by them both at home and abroad, which differed from the Roman customs. Chief amongst these differences was the time of celebrating Easter, which was calculated in these countries according to an old method, since abandoned by the Church at large for a more accurate computation. The Celtic clergy, either not understanding the newer system, or, as they themselves said, preferring to abide by the old method that had always been in force in their church, and which was sacred to them as that practised by St. Columcille and their other teachers and saints, were most unwilling to make any change; but the difficulties that arose were so great, that from the date of St. Augustine's coming to England, in the very year in which St. Columcille died (597), vigorous efforts were made from time to time to bring the British and Irish churches into obedience. It was plainly impossible to

have Easter celebrated at different dates in the same country; one party having just completed its Easter festival when the other was about to begin its celebration. In 634 A.D. Pope Honorius wrote to the Irish Scots "earnestly exhorting them not to think their small number, placed in the utmost bounds of the earth, wiser than all the ancient and modern churches of Christ throughout the world"; and imploring them "not to celebrate a different Easter, contrary to the Pascal calculation, and the synodical decrees of all the bishops."* This letter must have been addressed to the Irish of the North of Ireland, for we find the Venerable Bede telling us that "the South of Ireland had long since, by the admonition of the Apostolic See, learned to observe Easter according to the canonical custom."†

The North of Ireland, with all the Columban monasteries, and their offshoots in Northumbria and abroad, continued their own method of computation long after this, and it was in this system that Adamnan had been reared. It was during his second visit to King Alfrid that Adamnan witnessed in Northumbria the observance of an Easter day different to that which he had been accustomed to keep. This led to a full consideration of the subject, with the result that he came over to the Roman method, and returning home to Hi (Iona) he endeavoured to induce his monastery to accept the new computation.

* Bede, Eccl. Hist. Bk. ii., chap. 19.

† Eccl. Hist., Bk. iii. chap 3.

But, Abbot though he was and had been for twenty years, the memory of the founder and the independent spirit of the monks was too strong to allow of change in the established order. He then sailed over to Ireland, to try to induce the Irish church to adopt the method now universally accepted elsewhere, and in this he was successful. Bede tells us that "he reduced many of them, almost all that were not under the dominion of Iona (*i.e.*, the Columban monasteries), to the Catholic unity, and taught them to keep the legal time of Easter."* Thus gradually ended, so far as Ireland was concerned, a struggle which Bede calculates to have lasted a hundred and fifty years; a struggle for things that seem now to us of little importance, but with which the history and traditions, the affections of the people and the independence of the church, were bound up. Though Adamnan returned again to Iona, and "earnestly inculcated the observance of the Catholic time of Easter" there, he was not able to move them, and the Columban churches did not arrive at uniformity till twelve years after his death.

It is distressing to find that the old friendship between Adamnan and Finnachta the Festive was broken by a serious quarrel, of which an account will be found in that king's reign. In this and some other stories the character of Adamnan does not show to advantage; he was a forcible and perhaps a self-willed man, and he

* Eccl. Hist., Bk. v., chap. 15.

had a great respect for his own authority, which sometimes brought him into collision with the temporal power. But apart from this, he was a man of great ability and resolution, and brought about in his lifetime many changes of importance in both Church and State. He was also a man of literary ability. Besides his great Life of St. Columcille, to which we are indebted not only for the chief part of our knowledge of the founder of Iona, but for much information about the organisation and life of the Columban monasteries, he wrote a book on the Holy Land, which Bede praises very highly, and from which he gives extracts. Adamnan had never himself been to the Holy Land, but he obtained his information from a traveller, a French Bishop, who had visited not only Palestine, but Damascus, Alexandria, and Constantinople. Such long journeys were at that time extremely rare and dangerous, and doubtless Adamnan's book aroused an interest in the Holy Land which had something to do with the pilgrimages thither which afterwards became common. This book he presented to King Alfrid, who rewarded him well for it.* The fame of Adamnan spread, and later in the century Alcuin ranks him with Columcille and Comgall.

* Bede, Bk. v., chaps. 15-17. We have not included the "Vision of Adamnan" among his works because, though it bears his name, the editor, Dr. Stokes, considers it to be later than Adamnan's time. It is a remarkable Vision of the happiness of heaven and the pains of hell.

PART III.

The Architecture and Art of Early Christian Ireland.

PART III.

THE ARCHITECTURE AND ART OF EARLY CHRISTIAN IRELAND.

CHAPTER XIX.

EARLY CHRISTIAN ARCHITECTURE.

Authorities:—Miss Stokes' "Early Christian Architecture in Ireland," and "Early Christian Art in Ireland;" Lord Dunraven's "Notes on Irish Architecture"; Brash's "Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland."

THE story of the Christian civilization of early Ireland would hardly be complete without some allusion to the various activities in art, architecture and learning to which the requirements of religious worship gave so strong an impetus. Wherever we travel in Ireland, we find the remains of early churches, of stone crosses and round towers, which speak to us from lonely spots and overgrown churchyards of a religious aspiration which spread itself over the length and breadth of the land. In our libraries and museums at home and abroad, we find illuminated manuscripts wrought with exquisite skill by Irish scribes, and reliquaries, shrines and

crosiers decorated by Irish artists. Scattered all over Western and Central Europe are to be found fragments of libraries collected by Irish monks and treasured by them in Irish monasteries abroad, while through the records of foreign nations there comes down to us the tradition of Irish names famous in their day for learning, and taking a prominent part in the general diffusion of culture throughout the ninth and tenth centuries. The story of these things does not rightly belong to the period we have been considering; no sculptured stone cross and no single round tower comes to us from the days of St. Finnian and St. Columcille; the earliest that can be dated belong to the tenth century; while the first little church that shows a knowledge of the true arch, the understanding of the principle of which formed the foundation stone upon which Irish Romanesque architecture was built, was founded by Brian Boromhe in 1007.

It has become a tradition in Ireland that the value of everything worthy of note must be heightened by ascribing it to a remote past, and it comes with something of a shock to realise that the most striking and beautiful monuments of Irish architectural skill date from a period beginning not more than fifty years before the Norman conquest of England, and extending on to the latter end of the twelfth century, a period also of activity in the production of sculptured stone crosses, and of metal-work of great beauty and excellence. The work

of illumination of manuscripts seems to have been an older art, and we have specimens of illumination of a perfection that was never afterwards surpassed in copies of the Gospels which appear to date from the sixth or seventh century. The Book of Durrow may possibly date from the sixth century, the Book of Kells from the seventh or eight century; the Book of Armagh, which contains the only complete copy of the New Testament existing in Ireland in manuscript, besides the Confession of St. Patrick and other matter, was completed in the beginning of the ninth century. But none of the costly covers in which these precious manuscripts were afterwards enclosed appear to date earlier than the close of the ninth century. We know, from the inscriptions they bear, the exact years in which many of them were made. Explain it how we will, it was during the time that the hand of the Northman lay heavy on the land, that the great outburst of artistic excellence dates. The influx of fresh ideas provided a stimulus in this as in many other directions, and the destruction of churches and dissipation of their sacred objects and books provided a motive for exertion to replace the treasures that were lost. Of the value from an artistic point of view of these lost relics we have unfortunately no means of judging. The metal-work and the architectural remains of an earlier time that have come down to us are of the rudest and simplest description. Yet it is not possible that it was for the sake of

tiny iron bells such as the iron bell of St. Patrick that the Northman thought it worth while to rifle the monasteries, or for any similar objects. There must have been vessels and relics of greater value, however difficult it may be to account for the fact that no single object of this sort has come down to us.

The mastery shown in the art of illumination proves that practised artists, with a long tradition behind them as to the principles of design, the knowledge of colour and its application, and the treatment of limited spaces, existed early in the seventh century, if, indeed, we can safely date these manuscripts so early. But it would seem that the native art in metal-work, which had been practised with the most admirable results before the introduction of Christianity, received a check in the early Christian period, probably from the influx of foreign ideas, from which it did not immediately recover. When it revived in the tenth century it had taken into itself certain new forms, which we are accustomed to consider distinctively Irish, but which, as they are not found in the existing specimens of pre-Christian art, were possibly imbibed from foreign intercourse. Such are the interlaced or spiral designs, which entirely replaced the native "trumpet-pattern" somewhere about the middle of the eleventh century, after which this purely Irish form of decoration, which appears so frequently and with such bold and rich effect both in the metal-work and the illumination of an earlier day, totally disappears.

It is to be understood that what we have to say here about the architecture and art of Ireland is in no wise to be looked upon as an attempt to treat of this large subject from the artistic point of view. That has been done more than once by writers fully competent to deal with such matters; we have here only to touch upon it from the historical standpoint, as one of those movements which help to explain and which were the outcome of the introduction of the Christian ideas which we have been studying in this volume. Those who wish to know more of the subject could not have a better guide than Miss Margaret Stokes' "Early Christian Art in Ireland," which gathers into a compact form a great deal of valuable and curious information about both the stone and metal work of Ireland from the beginning of the Christian period up to its latest developments of the thirteenth century. In the following chapters we shall only aim at giving a brief historical sketch, which may perhaps lead some readers to seek elsewhere fuller information on a subject which ought to be of interest to all Irish people, namely, the rise and development of their beautiful native art.

The earliest existing Christian architecture in Ireland arose directly out of, and was probably contemporaneous with, the beehive dwellings of the pagan period.

In early Christian times the saint or missionary erected for himself a cell or oratory built on the exact pattern and of much the same size as the dwelling-huts

which he was accustomed to see around him. Nothing could exceed the rude simplicity of the early hermit cells found on those lonely and desolate spots on the western coasts and islands, to which, with that singular love of solitude which possessed the soul of the Irish monk, he retired for a life of reflection and self-mortification. Equally primitive are the groups of beehive cells and small oratories surrounded by an encircling wall or cashel which formed the original monastic settlement of the sixth century. Occasionally these settlements were made within the already existing pagan fort of some chief inclined to Christianity, as was the case with Columcille's first church at Derry, placed on ground given to him for the purpose by his cousin Aedh, the reigning chief of that part of Donegal; but as a rule the monastic buildings had their own cashel, not following a definite plan, as that of the pagan fort always did, but circling irregularly round the group of buildings which they enclosed, and whose form was determined by the lie of the ground or the necessities of the community. Such a primitive settlement is that found on the lonely heights of the greater of the two Sceligs, which lift themselves like pyramids, sheer and smooth, out of the broad waters of the Atlantic off the Kerry coast, or the group of St. Enda of Aran, on the desolate Aran Isles.

Scelig Michael lies about twelve miles from the coast of Kerry. From a distance the cliffs seem to be almost perpendicular, and boats often find it difficult to ap-

proach, the swell from the ocean giving a rise and fall to the waves of over twenty feet. Like many other isolated rocks, which were in ancient times supposed to be inhabited by demons, the Greater Scelig is dedicated to St. Michael, whose powerful protection was invoked to put the evil spirits to flight.

The old approach to the monastery was on the north-east side, up the nearly perpendicular face of the cliff. Part of the old path has worn away, and has been replaced by a new footpath, but 620 of the ancient steps remain, beginning at a point 120 feet above the level of the sea. These steps are very steep, and in the higher portion of the road, dangerous. For centuries, pilgrimages have been made up this narrow way, called in the upper part, the "Way of the Cross." The monastic enclosure is entered by a low covered passage through the wall by which the buildings are surrounded, leading from the garden of the monks to the plateau on which the cells and the ruined Church of St. Michael are built. "The scene," to quote Miss Stokes' words, "is one so solemn and so sad that none should enter here but the pilgrim and the penitent. The sense of solitude, the vast heaven above and sublime monotonous motion of the sea beneath, would but oppress the spirit, were not that spirit brought into harmony with all that is most sacred and most grand in nature, by the depth and even the bitterness of its own experience."

The plateau on which the group of buildings stands

is about 180 feet in length by 100 feet in width. They consist of the Church of St. Michael and two smaller oratories, and six anchorite cells or dwelling-places, besides two holy wells and five *leachta* or burial-places, with rude crosses in them, all belonging to the earliest period, except the Church of St. Michael, which is later. The cells correspond exactly to the bee-hive dwellings of pagan times, but the oratories are rectangular within and round without, and have an east window with the deep internal splay so characteristic of early Irish church architecture. The roofs are domed as in the Clochans, one stone overlapping the other until they meet in the centre, and the doorways have inclined jambs, and a flat lintel.

The most remarkable feature is the wall which protects the settlement on the side of the cliff. It runs along the sheer edge of the precipice, yet the face of the masonry is firm and compact; the stones follow the curve of the wall and are laid in horizontal layers, with smaller stones filling the interstices. "It is astonishing," says Lord Dunraven, "to conceive the courage and skill of the builders of this fine wall, placed as it is on the very edge of the precipice, at a vast height above the sea, with no possible standing-ground outside the wall from which the builders could have worked; yet the face is as perfect as that of Staigue Fort, the interstices of the greater stones filled in with smaller ones, all fitted compactly and with marvellous firmness and

skill. There are projecting stones placed at intervals in the face of this wall, and it has been suggested that they may have been used by the builders to stand on but it is difficult to conceive men working in such a position at a height of 700-800 feet above the sea."

Little is known about this solitary settlement, where the monks, century after century, seem to have lived and died, and been buried in the simple burial-ground close to their cells, without leaving any memory as individuals on the records of their church. They were too isolated to take part in the affairs of the world at large, and too far off and inaccessible to tempt, as a rule, the devastating hand of the foreigner. One solitary record breaks through the darkness with which time has enveloped these simple monks, the white stone cross over whose oratories, made of carefully chosen pebbles from the beach, carried up and fitted into their places above the doors, must have been an emblem of the self-denying character of their daily existence. This one record is brief, and pitiful as it is brief. It runs thus :—

"A.D. 823. Scelig Michael was plundered by the foreigners; and they took Eitgal (the Abbot) with them into captivity, and it was by miracles that he escaped, and he died of hunger and thirst by them."*

What a history of terror and misery is summed up in these few words. The dread of the humble community

* "Wars of the Gaedhil with the Gaill." Edited by Dr. Todd.

as the Northman's vessels, cruising along the southern coast, stopped beneath their cliffs; the ascent of the precipice by those hardy and ruthless foes; the weak resistance, followed by the destruction of the cells and the slaughter of the monks, which the abbot beheld but could not stay; the carrying off of Eitgal for subsequent ill-treatment and his almost miraculous escape from their hands, ended at last by a miserable death from hunger and thirst in trying to regain his shattered monastery. Such must have been the history of many a dignitary and many a community in those darksome days of monastic peril.

This is the first notice of the settlement upon Scelig Michael that we meet with; there is no record of its founder; but that the monastery must have been re-established is proved by brief entries of the deaths of Abbots in the years 950 and 1044. It is said that St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh in 1134, the friend and correspondent of St. Bernard, took refuge here when he retired from Bangor, Co. Down.

Of the history of the ancient monastery of Aran we know more than of that of Scelig Michael, but the dates are, as is the case with all foundations coming down from a very remote period, confusing, and not to be relied upon.

St. Enda, its founder, is said, according to one account, to have died about 484, which would make him contemporary with or earlier than St. Patrick; and yet

he is said in another account to have been visited in 540 by St. Ciaran and St. Brendan, who assisted him in managing his monastery. His story runs that he was the son of a King of Oriel, a territory extending from Lough Erne in Fermanagh to the sea at Dundalk, and was converted by his sister, a nun who had established a convent near the present town of Enniskillen. He went to study under St. Ninnian at the ancient monastery of Withern, in Galloway, and thence he passed on to Rome. Returning to Ireland, he begged some land on which to settle from his brother Aengus, a Munster Prince who had been baptised by St. Patrick. He implored Aengus to give him a grant of a certain wild and lonely island in the western sea, where he might retire into solitude. The king tried to dissuade him, using as an argument that a terrible race of heathen men inhabited those islands, and that his life would be in constant danger. Enda, however, persisted, and the Aran Isles were eventually granted to him and to any brethren who might wish to accompany him thither. There he settled, and the desolate spot became so much a centre of religion and learning, that it was known as Aran na Naomh, or Aran of the Saints. Edna himself lived that life of self-mortification which was so common among the early saints. "He used to be in a stone prison praying for all persons," says a Calendar which chronicles his name. The tradition ascribing a great age to this foundation is probably a true one. Though

the masonry is in some of the churches and oratories more advanced than in others, there is nothing in Ireland more primitive than are some of the cells on Aranmore. They are "Clochans" of the most rude description. On the other hand Temple Benan is formed of dressed and well-laid masonry. The church of Kilmedurch can be dated; its founder, Colman Mac Duach, lived early in the seventh century, and was of the family of Guaire the Hospitable.

The belfry and one of the churches still connect the settlement with the name of its traditional founder. They are called Enda and Kill Enda. The affection felt by St. Columcille for Aran, which he calls "The Sun of all the West" is touchingly shown in some lines that he penned to it.

"Aran thou Sun, Aran thou Sun,
My love lies in it west;
Within the sound of thy sweet bells
The way-farer is blest."

Certain constant and easily-recognised features mark the gradual advance in Church architecture in Ireland. The first of these is the style of its doorway, which is low and square-headed, the jambs inclining inwards towards the top. This form of doorway is found in churches, oratories and cells of every period. It is one of the most constant, as it is one of the most impressive,

characteristics of Irish church building from the sixth century right on to the tenth or eleventh. Its massiveness and gravity give a feeling of awesome solemnity even to little churches of hardly twenty feet in length, while in such an example as the doorway of Maghera, it rises in majestic proportions, richly sculptured with scenes from the Passion of our Lord. The horizontal entablature seems to have survived the discovery of the principle of the true arch, and we find occasional examples of a combination of the newer form with the old, as at Banagher, where, in the interior of the doorway, the weight of the wall is lifted from the horizontal lintel by the insertion of a round arch above it.

The rude stone of great size which forms the roof of the door in the earliest examples gives place gradually to well-dressed material, sometimes moulded or otherwise ornamented with carvings, but the horizontal form and inclined jambs lingered on, as though it were felt that a form so dignified and simple was that which most fittingly expressed the attitude of devotion; it impresses us still, whenever we come across it to-day, with a peculiar sense of gravity and aloofness. On a much smaller scale, we experience the same feeling as we do on entering an Egyptian temple, for the proportions in either case are so well calculated that each perfectly attains its effect.

The window is the next point to which we must

direct attention. It is at first either square like the door, or simply formed of two stones meeting at the top in a point. The first idea of an arch is found in the hollow rudely scooped out of one or two stones, while at times we find stones so laid over one another that they formed a rude archway. The first buildings which show a feeling after the true arch are those erected by Cormac O'Cillen, Abbot of Clonmácnois between 952-964, and the churches of Killaloe and Iniscaltra, built by Brian Boromhe in or about 1007. It was the erection of these churches, and the opportunity for decoration henceforth provided by the arched windows and doorways, that brought about the great outburst of decorated architecture in Ireland. Miss Stokes would place later than this all Round Towers and other buildings which prove an understanding of the principle of the arch. She would date about a century and a half earlier than this those curious oratories, of which there are several examples in Ireland, which have beneath an outer high-pitched roof of stone an inner barrel vault, showing in its structure the transition from the false to the true arch. In the earliest of these, the church on Friar's Island, near Killaloe, the vault of the chancel is formed in the primitive fashion, of stones which overlap until they meet; in St. Columba's house at Kells, though the vault is built in the same manner, the centre is keyed. This building she concludes to have been erected in the year 807.

St. Kevin's "Kitchen," as the Saint's house at Glendalough is popularly called, is a very perfect example of this kind of building, which is all the more interesting on account of the very remarkable round belfry which rises over the west end of the oratory. The building is double-vaulted, with an attic between the vaults, as at St. Columba's house at Kells. The west door had a lintel with a relieving arch over it, but the chancel "arch" is simply cut out of the solid wall. The chancel no longer exists. A more ornate form, and one in which the false arch is no longer seen, is found in Cormac's chapel at Cashel, where both the inner barrel-vault and the outer pointed barrel-vault, are constructed on the regular arch principle.

The windows in the earliest churches were merely slits placed on the outer surface of the thick wall, and were deeply splayed within, or they were splayed on both the outer and the inner side. Up to a late date they, like the doors, retain the inclined jambs which are so striking a feature in Irish architecture; they are almost always wider at the bottom than the top.

It is necessary to bear carefully in mind the exceedingly small size of the Irish churches, even of those built at a comparatively late period. We are apt to be led into false conceptions by the frequent mention in the Annals of the Damhliag Mór, or "Great Stone Church" of Armagh and other places. But these buildings, which seemed in their own day to be of surprising size,

would appear to us diminutive indeed. They were seldom more than sixty feet in length and narrow in proportion. As late as 1164, we find in the Annals of the Four Masters the mention of the rebuilding of the "Great Church" of Doire or Derry (now the parish of Templemore), which was erected by the successor of Columcille, by his clergy, and by Murtough O'Lochlinn, King of Ireland, and opened with special solemnity. Yet this twelfth century "great church" was, we learn, only eighty feet long, and was built in forty days. It is said of Patrick's monastic establishment near Armagh, that the fort or cashel was 140 feet (a measurement that we find retained in many later settlements constructed on the same general plan), the Great House 27 feet, with 17 feet in the Kitchen and 7 feet in the Oratory. "And it is thus the houses of the churches were built always."*

The smallness of the churches in the monastic settlements strikes the observer with surprise, when he recollects the vast numbers of students gathered in some of these centres; but we are to regard them rather as oratories, where the saint worshipped or celebrated the Divine Mysteries, than as congregational churches intended to accommodate a number of persons. At various places we find groups of seven or more of these tiny churches, each bearing the name of the saint who erected it, and who worshipped there; their number was

* Stokes' "Trip. Life of St. Patrick" I., p. 237.

increased, not so much to accommodate a larger number of the community, as to supply the needs and commemorate the person of one or more of its distinguished members.

Simple as these oratories were, their builders seem to have acquired a certain fame, even outside the limits of their own country. In Welsh legend we hear that St. Cadoc, who bore a great love for Ireland, in which he had passed several years of his youth, employed an Irish workman to superintend the building of his oratory. The unfortunate architect came to a bad end, for it is said that the other workmen were so jealous of his superior skill, that they killed him, and cast his body into a deep pool. The legend goes on to relate that the murdered architect appeared one night to Cadoc, carrying his head on his bosom, and with "a woeful and horrid countenance, wet and bloody," related to the saint the deed of the wicked workmen, who were duly punished for their misdeeds."*

The earliest form of the oratory was round without and rectangular within, formed of over-lapping stones, meeting in the centre and supported only by their own weight and inclination. Next, we have those that are rectangular both within and without, still erected without mortar or cement of any kind. The weakness of these oratories in the centre of the roof has caused many of them to fall in. The most perfect specimen

* Life of St. Cadoc, Rees' "Cambro-British Saints," p. 338.

is that of the Oratory of Gallerus, near Dingle, in Kerry, and nothing could well be conceived more primitive than is the aspect of this little church. Its length is fifteen feet three inches by ten feet to ten feet three inches inside. It is simply a rectangle without chancel, the chancel being, wherever it is found, a much later addition. The doorway is flat-headed, with inclined sides, the deeply splayed tiny window at the east end is round-headed, and the walls of the oratory have sunk by their own weight in the centre. The now lonely district in which this oratory and that of Kilmalkeder stand must, if we are to believe a curious legend, once have been peopled with saints. It lies beneath the mountain on which is built the oratory of St. Brendan, the voyaging saint, who, looking across the broad Atlantic from this lofty summit, dreamed of lands with great rivers and many-coloured birds, and planned his journey thither. The story goes that on one occasion the religious from the monastery below set out in line to make the ascent of the mountain, in order to pray at the Oratory of St. Brendan on the top. When the first monk arrived on the summit, he discovered, to his great annoyance, that he had left his service-book behind him. Word was passed from mouth to mouth down the mountain, and it was fortunately discovered that the last of the long line of brethren coming on behind was only just leaving Kilmalkeder as the first reached the top of the hill. He therefore was able to return to the church, and pass the

book from hand to hand up the hill to its owner. This quaint story points to a tradition of a large population in what is now an almost uninhabited region.

With the discovery and adoption of the arch, a great advance began. To many of the earlier rectangular churches a chancel was added, and we frequently find a combination of the more primitive form in the nave, with its old square-headed doorway and narrow splayed windows, opening by a fine chancel arch into the newer part of the church. Rich carving and ornament begin to appear first on the arch, and afterwards on the doors and windows, and Irish Romanesque, more diminutive in scale, but not less perfect in its details than its contemporary art elsewhere, blossomed forth into beauty.

The destruction of the old churches during the Norse occupation made place for the building of more elaborate structures. The energy of Brian Boromhe and one or two other princes and abbots went far to encourage the erection all over Ireland of those exquisite structures whose style is seen in its highest perfection in such churches as Queen Dervorgill's Church at Clonmacnois, erected in 1168, and King Cormac's Chapel at Cashel, finished about 1134. The history of these developments would, however, carry us far beyond the limits of the period we have been considering.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ROUND TOWERS.

Authorities, as before, with Petrie's "Origin and Uses of the Round Towers of Ireland."

No architectural feature in Ireland has been more fruitful in arousing discussion than the Round Towers, and about no other have such wild and improbable theories been advanced. The idea that they were dedicated to the worship of the sun long held ground, and satisfied that craving for antiquity that attaches itself to all things Irish. A little consideration would, however, have shown some strong reasons for placing these towers in Christian times, even before their date from other data came to be approximately determined. For instance, they are exclusively found in connection with some early church, or ecclesiastical settlement, near the north-west door of the church. This fact alone would suggest their connection with Christianity.

Again, the architectural history of the Round Towers corresponds in every particular with that of the other ecclesiastical buildings of Ireland. As Miss Stokes has shown in a carefully-planned chart, which includes some fifty out of seventy-six remaining towers of Ireland, a gradual advance can be traced both in the style of the

masonry, and in the form of the doors and windows. They can therefore be compared, step by step, with the early churches and oratories, and the parallel development may be safely considered contemporaneous. In the earliest towers, which include Lusk, Clondalkin, Swords, Antrim and Scattery, we find the building material to be of rough field-stones, undressed by hammer or chisel, fitted without rounding into the curve of the wall, with small stones used to fill up the interstices. The windows are narrow apertures, square-headed or triangular, and the doors also square-headed with inclined sides.

In the second style, the stones become more carefully dressed and are rounded to the course of the wall. In the third and fourth styles, the stones are well-laid in horizontal courses, and cemented, gradually advancing to the finest possible examples of dressed ashlar, while in the doors and windows the gradual introduction of the idea of the arch, more or less decorated, shows that the architects of the round towers were advancing along the same line of development as the builders of the churches, and leaves us no ground for reasonable doubt that the two series of ecclesiastical structures were contemporaneous. Anyone who has attentively followed out the argument as to date obtained from the structures themselves, will acknowledge its force, amounting to practical certainty; but when this testimony of the stones is reinforced by the testimony of the Annals,

it becomes overwhelming. It is not until the beginning of the tenth century that the towers are first mentioned in the Annals, though after this date the allusions to them become fairly frequent. Alas! they are usually notices of the destruction of a tower, either by the foreigners or by some catastrophe of nature; and short as these entries usually are, they are sometimes accompanied by pathetic details. The very first of these runs as follows:—"A.D. 948. The cloictech (belfry) of Slane burned by the foreigners, with its full of relics and distinguished persons, together with Caineachair, Lector of Slane, and the crosier of the patron saint, and a bell, the best of bells."* Or again, in the year 1013, we read in the Annals of Ulster, "Armagh was altogether burned, namely, the great stone church, with its roof of lead (*i.e.*, the Cathedral) and the belfry with its bells, with two other stone churches, and the chariot of the abbots, and the old preaching chair, on the third of the Kalends of June, the Monday before Whitsuntide. Armagh was burnt from one end to the other; save only the library all the houses were burnt, the great church steeple, the church of Savall, the pulpit or chair of preaching, together with much gold and books, were burned by the Danes."

The destruction of the cloictech was not always the work of the foreigner. The tall slender towers with their conical caps were peculiarly liable to be caught by

* Annals of the Four Masters.

the wind, or by lightning, and to suffer partial or complete overthrow. In 986 a great wind prostrated the steeple of Louth with many other buildings, and in 1121 the conical cap of Armagh belfry was knocked off by the conical cap of Armagh belfry was knocked off by cap of the belfry of Duleek, and in 1135 lightning struck off the head of that of Clonmacnois.

The belfry was sometimes, too, a sufferer through the local raids of Irish princes; in 1127 a number of persons took refuge in the cloictech of Trim from the armies of Conor Mac Fergall O'Lochlinn, who was hosting from Donegal into Meath; the tower was fired, and the unfortunates within all put to death.* The same thing happened in Ossory in 1156, when the whole country was wasted by Murtoch O'Lochlinn, and the churches and steeple of Durrow were destroyed.†

The purpose to which these towers were put is clear from these passages. They were places of refuge built in times of public danger, to which the population could flee for safety on any sudden descent of the foe. Standing, as they did, close to the church, it is probable that the sacred vessels, bells, manuscripts, and relics were at all times preserved in the tower, where they were comparatively safe from the risk of fire or of theft. There are projections from the inside walls of some of the round towers, which seem to have been used as

* Annals of Inisfallen, A.D 1127.

† *Ibid*, A.D. 1156.

ledges or pegs on which the leathern satchels in which books were kept, were hung, or upon which shrines and reliquaries were deposited.

But the towers were more than treasuries. They were watch-towers from which the movements of an enemy could be marked, and keeps in which the inhabitants might find safety. Divided inside into several stories, reached by ladders, these belfries were capable of containing a large number of persons. Here, on the first alarm, the whole population of the village or the members of the monastic community, could take refuge. The door was high on the side of the wall, and when the ladder was drawn up it would have been difficult for the enemy to effect an entrance. Their only plan of attack seems to have been to fire the door, which probably ended in the suffocation of the unhappy occupants. The frequent mention of the death of lectors or other clerics points to the association of the steeple with the church, but that it was not exclusively intended for the use of the clergy is shown by the account of several destructions in which the tower "with its full of people" is mentioned. It is more likely that they were used as general places of refuge during the Danish wars.

On one occasion, we read of a King of Tara taking shelter for three days and nights in the cloictech of Kells, where he was besieged and slain by his foes.*

The door of the Round Tower of Scattery Island is

* See Annals of the Four Masters, A.D. 1076.

on the ground floor; probably on account of its being separated from the mainland, it was thought sufficiently secure; but in other cases the door is placed ten or more feet above the ground. In height, the perfect towers range from about 60 to 125 feet, with a circumference of from 49 to 52 feet. Lusk is 100 feet by 43 feet; Scattery, 125 feet by 52 feet; Monasterboice and Glendalough, 110 feet by 51 and 52 feet; on some of them there is moulding round the doors or windows, sometimes a figure of Christ or carved heads appear over the doorway, or the Crucifixion in relief speaks of the Christian origin and associations of the tower. This, however, is rare. Round the top of the tower on Devenish belfry runs a rich cornice, and the doorway is ornamented with an architrave. The foundation of St. Molaise of Devenish must have been a wealthy one, for three of the most beautiful shrines that have been found in Ireland come from Fermanagh, the Domnach Airgid, containing the copy of the Gospels traditionally given by St. Patrick to the See of Clogher;* the Soiscel Molaise, a splendid shrine made by one of the founder's successors in the beginning of the eleventh century to hold the Gospels of the Patron Saint; and a beautiful little bronze shrine fished up in Loch Erne in 1891. The Gospels of St. Molaise are said in one account to have been brought

* See Chapter xxi., p. 236. As there were no regular Sees till long after St. Patrick's day, this must be a comparatively late tradition.

by him from Rome, where he is said to have "said Mass in the presence of the whole community of Romé at the shrine of the Apostles." Another legend says that it was written for him by the sons of Declan in two days and one night, during a visit to his monastery. With his dying breath Molaise requested that the Soiscel should be built up in a wall round his well, Tubbar Molaise, where it was eventually found. There seems to have been a tendency to bury or conceal precious copies of the Gospels belonging to founders of monasteries. St. Kilian's Gospels were believed to have been recovered from his tomb, in which they were buried with him*; and the Gospel of St. Martin is said to have been buried on the breast of St. Columcille. There is no doubt that Molaise exercised some kind of large jurisdiction in Ireland. His advice or decision was sought in several important cases. It was to him that St. Columcille went after the battle of Culdremhne, and through his advice he left Ireland and went to Iona.

The wealth of Devenish is said to have been the result of a dispute which was settled by the argument of the sword at "Devenish of the Assemblies." After the combat, Molaise sent four of his community to ask King Dermot what part of the property of the slain men he would claim, for they had on their garments, necks, and weapons as much gold and silver as two men could carry. The king declined to

* Berger dispels this legend in his "Histoire de la Vulgate," p. 54.

take any part from Molaise, saying, "Let him make reliquaries of it." Another story has it that when the Yellow Death broke out, the prayers of St. Molaise were so powerful to stay it, that a tribute was given to him annually from every chief and every household in Erinn. There evidently was a tradition that the foundation was a rich one, a tradition that is fully borne out by the treasures that have been obtained from it. The Fermanagh monasteries must also have enjoyed some special renown or distinction for learning, for it was to the Abbey of Loch Erne that King Alfrid of Northumbria came to seek instruction, and it was while he was there that he wrote his poem on the beauties of Ireland.

The frequent mention of bells in connection with the towers, as well as the name Cloictech or Belfry which was given to them, seems to point to some association between the two; yet it is difficult to see how the Round Towers could have been used as bell-towers in the ordinary sense of the term. There is no sign in any of them of means for the hanging or pulling of bells, nor would it have been possible for the little hand-bells which were, so far as we know, the only kind of bells in use at this period, to have been heard beneath the tower if they were rung at the top.* Nor are there, except in a few of the towers of late date, any windows or openings at the top of the structure which would suggest

* See Chapter xxii., p. 246.

their use for the emission of sound. The windows are irregularly placed on the different stages, generally facing different points of the compass; and, especially in the earlier towers, they are often close to the floor, for what purpose is unknown, unless, perhaps, for the emission of projectiles. They are very small and quite unsuited to emit the sound of a bell, even had there been a knowledge of casting large bells, suitable for such a purpose. It is possible that the later structures having windows at the top may have been used as belfries proper, but hardly likely that the larger number of them were so, or that they were designed for this purpose. They are more likely to have been used as depositories of the church bells than bell-towers in the modern sense. Great reverence was paid to the early sacred bells, which were always blessed, and even at times baptised, before use. We may, therefore, look upon these remarkable structures as places of refuge and safety both for human beings and for the sacred vessels and manuscripts belonging to the Church rather than as mere steeples for the ringing of bells. Placed close to the oratory, the door of the tower facing the door of the church, the shelter of its firm and commodious walls was always easily accessible by the clergy and people. From its topmost openings, all points of the compass could be watched, and a speedy alarm given; and once within and the door closed and ladder drawn up, the inhabitants were in comparative safety.

From the small openings, which could not easily be penetrated by any weapon from without, stones and projectiles could be launched on the head of any intruder; and, shut up there, the occupants might watch almost at their ease the course of the depredations committed by the enemy below. The tiny stone churches could quickly be rebuilt when the invader passed on to another scene; indeed we find from the recurrence of almost annual destructions of monastic establishments in certain well-known places which lay on the frequented routes, that they were actually erected again and again, often with very short lapses of rest between.

Yet, though it is probable that the assaults of the Northmen gave the chief impetus to the erection of the round towers, they continued to be built up to the middle of the thirteenth century; the belfry of Annaghdown was constructed in 1238. Scattered all over the country they still stand in their silent strength to-day, as they stood in the times of foreign incursion, calm, dignified, and picturesque, symbols of safety in the midst of confusion, of peace and confidence in the midst of terror. The little churches at their feet are wasted by the hand of time, the graveyards overgrown; but the round tower still holds erect its head, casting over the ancient settlement the same feeling of protective care, the same sense of patient watchfulness that made it in days gone by the guardian of the village, the one spot of repose and security.

The artist upon whose mind first dawned the conception of the Round Tower, combined in his design to a remarkable degree the qualities of lightness, elegance and strength; no structure could have more satisfactorily and simply fulfilled its purpose as a place of refuge, while none could at the same time more completely have combined artistic sense of proportion with the religious feeling of aspiration.

CHAPTER XXI.

BOOKS AND ILLUMINATION.

Authorities:—Miss Stokes' "Early Christian Art in Ireland"; Westwood, 'Palæographia Sacra Pictoria"; Gilbert, "Facsimiles of the National MSS. of Ireland." For the early texts of the Gospels the chief authority is Berger's "Histoire de la Vulgate pendant les premiers siécles du moyen âge," Paris 1393. See also Scrivener's "Introduction to the criticism of the New Testament" Vol. II., 4th Ed., 1894.

THE special acquirement of the Columban monks was the copying and illumination of manuscripts. To this they devoted their most patient and loving care, and many of the results of their long hours of labour are with us still, as fresh and exquisite, in many instances, as they were when they left the hands of the illuminating scribe. The beautiful book which the Welsh historian, Giraldus, saw in 1185 in St. Brigit's Monastery in Kildare. and which so filled him with astonishment that he was ready to assert that it was "the work of angelic and not of human skill," is unfortunately lost, but the Books of Durrow and Kells, the Book of MacDurnan, and several other manuscripts adorned with illuminations, remain to show the mastery attained by the Irish scribes in this delicate art.

The office of scribe was held in great esteem in Ireland, and many a famous bishop and abbot has the

honourable title of "Scribe" added to his name. The calling seems to have been pursued by men of every rank, and in the early days of the monastic life, when books were few, and the demand for them was great, the work of writing copies of the Gospels and other books was part of the regular course of each student, many of whom doubtless became accomplished scribes. At that early date, when the chief object was to supply the churches and schools, few, if any, of the books were probably illuminated; it would have been impossible for St. Columcille to have spent months of labour in illuminating each of the three hundred books that he is said to have written with his own hand, or for St. Finnian to have adorned the copies of the Gospels which he gave, accompanied by a reliquary, to each of his pupils, and "round which," it is said, they "built their churches afterwards." Writing on parchment was still rare in the days of the founders of the monasteries of whom we have been speaking; wax tablets were in use even for copies of the Scriptures. There is, in the Life of St. Ciaran of Clonmacnois, a quaint story of a favorite fox which St. Ciaran had taught to follow him daily when he went to give a lesson to one of his pupils from a psalter written on wax. The Saint trained the fox to carry the wax tablets in his mouth, and he would then lie down quietly till the lesson was finished. But one day "his natural malice broke through the fox," and tempted by the leathern bands with which the

tablets were fastened, he began to eat the book, retiring with it into a place of shelter. The tablets were, however, rescued from him before they were destroyed.

Wooden tablets were also still in use, and must have been of a singular shape, for we learn that when St. Patrick and his followers appeared in the country, their tablets were mistaken by the people for swords. Yet it is probable that wooden tablets of some other shape had long been in use in Ireland.

There is one copy of the Gospels remaining which belonged to the important monastery of Durrow, the chief of the Columban foundations during the lifetime of the founder (though the headship was afterwards transferred to Iona and later to Kells), which seems to claim to be the work of the great saint himself. At the close of the first and apparently the oldest portion, there is added one of the customary appeals to the reader to remember the scribe whose writing he is perusing. It runs:—"I pray thy blessedness, O holy presbyter, Patrick, that whosoever shall take this book into his hands may remember the writer, Columba, who have myself written this Gospel in the space of twelve days by the grace of our Lord." Some writers have suggested that this is not the great Saint Columba, but a later scribe of the same name; but this seems unlikely, especially as we have another inscription in the same book containing his name, copied from the Cumdach or cover, which has been lost. Yet, apart from the plain

fact that a copy containing the elaborate illuminations of the Book of Durrow could not have been produced in anything like twelve days, it is, on the face of it, improbable that a work which must have required months of close attention and the highest artistic training should have been undertaken by a busy man like St. Columcille. The book transcribed in twelve days could not have been the existing Book of Durrow. But a simple explanation suggests itself. It was the good custom of the Irish copyist to transcribe any marginal notes that he found on the copy before him as carefully as the rest of the contents. It seems likely that the scribe who produced this beautiful work was copying from an earlier manuscript written by St. Columcille, and bequeathed by him, as was his usual custom, to his foundation. Had he been pressed for time, it is possible that the original might have been produced in twelve days; he must often have written hurriedly when moving from place to place; and the note made by him on the margin, a note of such peculiar interest, would naturally be transferred by the scribe into his magnificent work.

The great industry shewn in copying the Scriptures even by the most famous Saints, and by those whose time was otherwise most fully occupied, surprises us. Of one Irishman abroad, a learned Donegal monk who settled at Ratisbon, in Bavaria, in the year 1076, and founded there a great monastery which became the

parent of many Irish branches on the Continent, it is recorded that "he wrote from beginning to end, with his own hand, the Old and New Testaments, with explanatory comments, not once or twice, but over and over again, with a hope of the eternal reward; all the while clad in snowy garb, living on slender diet, attended and aided by his brethren, who prepared the parchments for his use. He wrote also many smaller books, and manuals and psalters, for distressed widows and poor clerics of the same city, towards the health of his soul, without any prospect of earthly gain." These writings of this Donegal monk became the treasured possessions of those monasteries which broke off, on account of the increasing numbers of their adherents, from the parent stock, and we still have a copy of the "Epistles of St. Paul" remaining which was written by him for "his pilgrim brethren" who came to him from Ireland. It is preserved in the Imperial Library at Vienna, and was transcribed between March 23rd and May 17th, 1079. The name of this learned monk was in Ireland Muiredach Mac Robertaigh, or, as he was usually called, Marianus Scotus "the Scot" or "Irishman," not to be confused with another Irish monk of the same name,* of whom we have already spoken, who lived about the same time as an 'incluse' at Fulda and Mayence, and who wrote the "Chronicle of the World." The history of Ratisbon is an interesting one. Seven of Marianus

* See Chapter xvi., pp. 154-157.

immediate successors in the Abbacy were natives of the North of Ireland ; and its off-shoots at Würzburg, Vienna, Constance, and Nürnberg, were crowded with Irish monks, whose writings are some of them still in existence.

These books, which consist of classical works and of copies of parts of the Bible and ecclesiastical and church books, are written chiefly in Latin, but between the lines and on the margins are explanations and translations of passages, with commentaries on them, written by the scribes in their native tongue. It is from these explanations or glosses, added for the students of their own day in their own tongue, that our knowledge of the oldest forms of the Irish language is obtained. These copies of the classics or of the Epistles of St. Paul or other portions of the Scriptures, closely covered with notes in old Irish, the foreign relics of the early Irish monasteries, are of peculiar interest and importance. The Irish we find in them is older than any that remains to us at home, where, from the destruction of books during the Norse invasions, and from other causes, all the manuscripts dating from so early a period, except one or two precious illuminated copies of the Gospels in Latin, and the documents in the Book of Armagh, seem to have disappeared. It was on these glosses that Zeuss founded his great work upon the old Irish grammatical forms, called " Grammatica Celtica," and they

have since received careful and full elucidation at the hands of several scholars.*

St. James' of Ratisbon was known as the "Monasterium Scotorum," for at that time Ireland was still called Scotia, and its people Scots. But when the word ceased to be applied to Ireland, the Scotchmen of Scotland claimed the monastery as their own foundation, and it was actually handed over to them by Leo X., and the unfortunate Irish monks were driven out. It was the last remaining of the Irish foundations, and was only closed in 1860.

The scribes seem to have written with quills, and they held the manuscript either on their knees or supported it on a reading-desk before them. The ink was contained in an ink-horn, which was easily tipped over, and was therefore usually suspended from the arm of the chair. In the illuminated page of St. John's Gospel, in an Irish copy of the Gospels now at Lambeth Library called the Gospels of Mac Durnan, the Evangelist is represented as engaged in writing his Gospel. He holds in the right hand a curved quill which he is dipping into a conical cup of red paint, supported on a stick beside the chair. In his left he holds a short pointed rod or knife, probably used to steady the hand. We find the same instrument in the left hand of the scribe who is represented as illuminating the "Marvel-

* See Zimmer, "Glossæ Hibernicæ"; Stokes, "Goidelica," and Stokes and Strachan, "Thesaurus Palæohibernicus."

lous Kildare Gospels," in an illustrated copy of the writings of Giraldus, written about 1200.

The work of a scribe must often have become exceedingly wearisome and fatiguing, and indeed we find the manuscripts full of marginal notes, in which the tired copyist expresses his feelings as hour after hour passes in the close attention to his pen. There seems to have been a phrase which they were very fond of using,—"quia tribus digitis scribitur et totus membrus laboret" —for we find it on two manuscript copies of the Gospels abroad, one at Munich and one, certainly Irish, at Würzburg. It may be paraphrased thus :—

> "Three fingers only hold the reed,
> But every member toils indeed."*

On the margins of the collection of pieces, mostly ecclesiastical, which form the "Speckled Book" (Leabhar Breac) the scribes have made many marginal notes, expressive of their fatigue and boredom. Here are a few of them : "I am weary to-day from head to foot," says one. "Twenty days from to-day to Easter Monday," he says elsewhere, "and I am cold and tired without fire or shelter." Another, who has been copying the account of the Passion of Christ, says pathetically, "I shall remember, O Christ, that I am writing of Thee, because I am fatigued to-day. It is now Sunday even-

* H. J. White—*Old Latin Biblical Texts* No. III., p. ix.

ing." Another, who is angry at the sort of ink with which he is provided, gets impatient, and thus apostrophizes his ink-pot: "Ochone, dost thou still serve for ink? I am Cormac, son of Cosnamach, trying it at Dun Daigre, the place of the writing, and I am afraid we have got too much of the mischief of this ink." One of the most touching of these marginal notes is that made on the top space in the "Chronicle of the World" of Marianus Scotus, by an Irish scribe, who had presented himself at the monastery of Mayance soon after Marianus had been inclosed there, and whom, as he was a competent scribe and knew Latin, Marianus had retained to copy the "Chronicle of the World," on which he was engaged. One Thursday in June, the scribe stops his work and writes on the margin the following note:—"It is pleasant for us to-day, O Maelbrigte (*i.e.*, Marianus) incluse, in the inclusory of Mayance, on the Thursday before the feast of Peter, in the first year of my obedience to the Rule: namely, the year in which Diarmait, King of Leinster, was slain; and this is the first year of my pilgrimage from Scotland (*i.e.*, Ireland). And I have written this book for love of the Scots all, that is the Irish, because I am myself an Irishman." Can we not fancy the scribe, immured at his tedious task, stretching himself on that bright June morning, pleasant even to an incluse, as his thoughts turned home to the king and compatriots he had left behind him?

Let us speak further of the copies of the Gospels that remain in Ireland.

We read that Patrick "sowed the four books of the Gospel in Erin," and we found that it was chiefly copies of the Gospels and Psalters that St. Columcille is said to have multiplied so diligently. This corresponds to the fact that we possess in Ireland several early copies of the Gospels, generally illuminated, and one copy of the Psalter, the famous "Cathach" of the O'Donnell family, but only one complete manuscript of the New Testament, and no copy at all of the whole Bible. This does not prove that they never existed, for we must remember that those copies that we possess have been preserved solely on account of their special value, either from the traditions connected with them, or from the beauty of their workmanship.

Numbers of these church books were destroyed by the Danes, so much so that King Brian Boromhe had to send abroad for copies to replace them, and doubtless many were lost in subsequent ages. It is plain that it was for ecclesiastical manuscripts and service-books in Latin that Brian sent abroad, and not for Irish manuscripts, as some have thought, which could not have been obtained on the Continent.

No copy of the Gospels of the age of St. Patrick remains in Ireland, and though there exist in the Irish monasteries of St. Gall and Bobio some fragments of the Gospels as old as the fifth century (*i.e.*, as the time

of St. Patrick), they are more likely to have been obtained by the Irish missionaries in Italy or Switzerland, than to have been carried abroad with them. One important Bobio manuscript of the Gospels, now at Turin, is said in the inscription which it bears, to have belonged to St. Columbanus himself, and to have been carried by him in his wallet. It would be very interesting if this book, which must have been nearly a hundred years old when St. Columbanus reached Bobio in his old age, could be proved to have been brought with him from Ireland, but there are peculiarities in the text which seem to make this improbable, so far as is now known.*

The study of these old texts of the Scriptures is only now being taken in hand, and until the whole of the existing early copies have been examined and compared together, no exact statements can be made about their origin and history. They present many curious and delicate problems, which we will briefly indicate, because the solution of these problems will probably contribute greatly to our knowledge of the development and outward connections of the Irish and British

* This manuscript, called Codex Bobiensis (marked G. vii., 15 in the Library at Turin), belongs to what is known as the "African type" of old Latin texts, of which it is the purest representative. In the quotations found in writings of St. Columbanus, he does not make use of this type of text, which would not favour the supposition that it was his constant companion. See *Old Latin Biblical Texts*, No. II., p. xvii., 1883.

Churches, and will give us a clue of much value as to the relations in which they stood to the church at large, between the periods of the sixth and the tenth centuries.

About the end of the second, or early in the third, century, a translation of the New Testament was made into Latin from the Greek. Perhaps there were more than one; but whether this was the case or not, it has come down to us in two or more forms, which are variously classified by different authorities. It is now generally accepted that the birthplace of the Latin version was in Africa,* but it is singular that the best example of this "African" text should be that preserved in the Irish monastery of Bobio, and traditionally said to have been the "identical book which the blessed Abbot Columban had been used to carry with him in his satchel." This is one of the, at present, unsolved questions which these manuscripts present.

If we adopt a division which has gained pretty general acceptance among scholars, and consider that there were three main forms in which this early Latin version has come down to us, the "African," the "European," and the "Italian,"† the question arises, to which group do the Irish versions belong. Now it is interesting to find that the Irish and British versions

* Card. Wiseman, "Two Letters on the Controversy concerning John, v. 7;" *Essays on Various Subjects*, pp. 245-314, 1888.

† Westcott & Hort's N.T. ii., pp. 78-84; Art, "Old Latin Versions," H. A. A. Kennedy, in Hasting's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

show some special peculiarities, which mark them off into a minor group of their own, closely related to the "European" family, but having distinct variations; in other words, it would appear that Ireland and Britain had their own version of this old Latin New Testament. Perhaps the other Western branches of the Church did the same.

It was in 383 that St. Jerome, who for the greater part of his lifetime had been contemplating a vision of the text of the Scriptures, produced a new translation of the four Gospels, as the first instalment of his great work. The translation had been commissioned by Pope Damasus, a learned man, who recognised the need of an authoritative version, to replace the numerous faulty versions, corrupted by the carelessness of copyists, then in use. In the course of the following twenty-two years, St. Jerome completed the translation of the New and Old Testaments and the Apocryphal books. The Psalter he revised more than once, as even in his own day corruptions crept in, and he was desirous of making his great work as perfect as he could. He was well qualified for the task, for he was an exact Latin scholar, writing in a style at once pure and lofty; he had a good knowledge of Greek, and he spent many years of his life in the Holy Land near Bethlehem, in order to acquire a perfect knowledge of Hebrew, as well as of the customs and topography of the East.

St. Jerome died some years later than the birth of

St. Patrick;* his version, known as the Vulgate, came gradually into general use, as the authorised version of the Scriptures. But in his own day, and for some time afterwards, it was only received with partial favour, for then, as now, people did not like to give up, especially in the services of the Church, the version to which they had been accustomed, however faulty, for one they were not familiar with. St. Jerome himself had feared this, and had only reluctantly undertaken a task which he felt might make him unpopular. So, even in Rome, the use of Jerome's version only gradually superseded the older forms, while in the outlying parts of the Empire it took some time, in days when news travelled slowly, for the knowledge of the existence and excellence of the new authorised version to spread. All through the West it came only slowly into use. St. Patrick seems not to have known of it; his quotations are from the earlier versions mingled with some peculiar uses of his own. In Ireland generally the old versions, peculiar to these islands, continued to hold their ground, even after the Vulgate became accepted. This gave rise to what are known as "mixed" texts, or texts which, while they are in the main or in part Vulgate, have readings and intrusions from the old Latin texts still found in them. All countries show a similar stage of mixed readings, but in no country is it so con-

* The date of Jerome's death is placed at 420, and St. Patrick must have been born some time before 400, A.D.

stant and marked a feature as in Ireland. It shows that an affection was felt for the older version or versions, which was not unnatural, if the Irish and British churches had a translation of their own, coming down from a very early date.

We often find that in the more familiar books the Vulgate is adopted, while the Old Latin readings linger on in the less used books; or again, one Gospel will sometimes follow the Vulgate, and another the Old Latin. Both versions lingered on and continued to be used side by side, and this up to a quite late period. Some mediæval sermons of the twelfth century or later, preserved for us in the Leabhar Breac, or "Speckled Book," a 14th century MS., quote from a form of text which still shows the influence of the Old Latin versions.

It is, however, a singular fact that the earliest remaining copy of the Gospels in Ireland is nearly pure Vulgate. This is the Book of Durrow, the book apparently copied directly from a manuscript by St. Columcille and possibly during his lifetime, for the best authorities now agree in thinking that it dates from the sixth or seventh century.* Now there exists a very interesting tradition both in Wales and Ireland that St. Finnian of Moville, the teacher of St. Columcille, who spent some time in

* White, art. "Vulgate" in Hasting's Dictionary of the Bible dates it sixth or seventh century. Berger, "Histoire de la Vulgate," Paris, 1893, dates it seventh or eighth century.

Rome, brought back with him a copy of the Gospels, which was named "the Golden Gospels of St. Finnian," and which he prized exceedingly. It is almost impossible to resist the conclusion that it was a copy of the Vulgate, then coming into general use in Rome, that he brought home with him, and that it was from this copy, seen by St. Columcille, his pupil, that the Book of Durrow original was made. Indeed, if O'Donnell's Life of the Saint had not so distinctly stated that the book copied by Columcille was the "Cathach," we should have the strongest grounds for supposing that the original of the Book of Durrow was the book secretly copied by Columcille, and about which St. Finnian was so angry that it led to the exile of the Saint from Ireland.* With his great love for multiplying copies of the Gospels, St. Columcille would naturally feel the keenest interest in the new "Authorised Version," and the greatest ambition to possess it. It is possible that the desire of the O'Donnells to extol the value of their own copy of the Psalter may have induced them to change the older tradition which is preserved in Keating. The inscription in the book, showing that it was written in twelve days, proves that it was copied in haste, for to transcribe the four Gospels even without any attempt at illumination in twelve days was a feat of swiftness, only likely to have been performed under pressure. It is also to be noted that the

* See Chapter xiii., pp. 112-113.

"Book of Kells," which is also the product of a Columban monastery, and which is supposed to have been written in the seventh or eighth century, has a text somewhat similar to that of the Book of Durrow, though less pure Vulgate, although most of the other remaining copies of the Gospels coming to us from this age show much more considerable signs of following the Old Latin text. The most important of these are the Book of Dimma, the Gospel of St. Molling, the Domnach Airgid Gospels, the Book of Armagh, and the Gospels of Maelbrigte MacDurnan; the latter are in the Library of Lambeth.

All these books, though they are founded on the Vulgate, show considerable traces of the older versions. In the Book of St. Molling a curious thing has happened. Though the body of the work is an almost pure Vulgate, four chapters from St. Matthew (Matt. xxiv., 12,—xxviii., 3,) and five from St. Luke are from the Old Latin version (Lk. iv., 5,—ix., 54,).* This happens quite suddenly and abruptly, and it shows that the scribe changed from copying a Vulgate manuscript to an Old Latin one twice in the course of his work. St. Molling was Bishop of Ferns, and died in 696 A.D., and the book bears his name. He is the saint who

* See Lawlor's "Book of St. Mulling," Edinburgh, 1897. Rev. M. Youngman has made a later collation of these passages in St. Luke, and he considers that the O-Lat. text goes on into the middle of Ch. xi.

gained the remission of the Boromhe from Finnachta the Festive by a fraud,* and with whom Adamnan had a dispute in consequence. The handwriting of the book, however, points to the ninth century, and as in so many other cases, the manuscript has probably been copied from an older exemplar left by the founder to his monastery. Until the eighteenth century it was preserved in the Kavanagh family, of which St. Molling was a member, at the family seat at Borris.

In the Book of Durrow, although the text is nearly pure Vulgate, we find a curious reminiscence of the older Biblical arrangement, in the Summary or "Capitulatio" with which the Gospels begin, and the divisions of the text into paragraphs. These Summaries of the contents of each Gospel and divisions into sections are almost always found in the Old Latin copies, but seldom in the Vulgate; it is therefore likely that in any manuscript in which they are found, the scribe must have had the older version before him.

Again, there is an illuminated page in this manuscript in which the symbols of the four Evangelists are represented, and these also show an acquaintance with a very old tradition, which gave the symbol of the man to St. Matthew, the eagle to St. Mark, the calf to St. Luke, and the lion to St. John. This seems to be the order followed by the illuminator, although this order

* See Chapter VII., pp. 64-69.

had been long since changed.* It is evident, therefore, that long after the Vulgate had become known in Ireland, many churches possessed, and still continued to copy and use, the older versions.

These details are not only interesting in themselves, but they have a great importance as furnishing some data from which the approximate age of a manuscript of the Gospels can be judged. For instance, it serves to make us cautious in accepting the popular ascription of the fragments of the four Gospels found in the Domnach-Airgid to St. Patrick, when we find that these fragments present us with a "mixed" Vulgate text, and not with the pure Old Latin text such as St. Patrick himself always quotes from in the Old Testament and usually in the New. This caution is justified on other grounds. The handwriting points to a later period than St. Patrick, and it is now believed to be more probably the work of a scribe of the eighth century, although Petrie, and after him Miss Stokes, date it without hesitation 460 A.D., during the lifetime of St. Patrick.

The belief that this manuscript was the work of St. Patrick arose out of a mention in the eleventh-century

* This is the order of Irenæus. St. Jerome accepted the view of Irenæus for St Matt. and St. Luke, but gives the lion to St. Mark, and the eagle to St. John. St. Augustine mentions both. There are also some verses in the Irish Gospels of Mac Regol (Rushworth), which indicate a knowledge of the old order. Lawlor's "Book of Mulling," p. 21.

"Tripartite Life of St. Patrick" that "Patrick left Bishop Mac Cairthinn in Clochan and with him the Domnach-Airgid, which had been sent to him from heaven when he was at sea coming towards Ireland." The inscription on the outer case so far corresponds with this that it shows that it belonged to the monastery of Clones, or See of Clogher, in the fourteenth century, and the case received its rich ornamentation, according to the inscription it bears, while one John O'Karbri, who died in 1353, was Abbot of Clones. It was for a long time in the possession of an old woman in Enniskillen, who said it had formerly belonged to the Maguire family; it is now one of the chief treasures of the National Museum, Dublin.

The reliquary in its present condition consists of an inner box of yew wood, a plain copper cover plated with silver, and the richly-ornamented outer case of silver, plated with gold, made about the middle of the fourteenth century. But it is never, in any old account of it, said to contain a manuscript. In Colgan's Life of St. Mac Cairthinn, it is described as a "shrine containing relics of the holy Apostles and of the holy Cross and a lock of the hair of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with other relics." It would seem to have been known, therefore, rather as a reliquary than as a cumdach, or cover of a book.*

* See art. on the Domnach-Airgid MS., by Dr. Bernard, in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, vol. xxx., p. 303, *seq.* June, 1893.

Another fact that points to the probability that the manuscript now contained in the case was not originally deposited in it, and that it was not made for this purpose, is the size of the manuscript itself. When the inner case of yew was opened, the manuscript within was found curled up and mutilated with age. When unrolled, it proved to be larger by nearly two inches in length, and by over an inch in breadth, than the box supposed to have been made on purpose to contain it. The leaves were so glued together that it was only by the most careful skill that any of them could be opened and deciphered, and a large number will always remain inseparable one from another. Four portions have, however, been read, viz., portions of Matt. i., 1,—v. 25; Mark i., 1,—iv., 12; Luke i., 6,—ii., 35; John i., 1,—iv., 14, and it is from these pages that the conclusions we have given above have been drawn, and which make it improbable that the manuscript is so old as the time of St. Patrick. In the same manner parts of the Book of Armagh are popularly ascribed to him, but we know from the inscription of the manuscript itself that it was completed in the year 807 by a scribe named Ferdomnach, who however tells us in one of his marginal notes that he was, in the "Confession," copying from a tract written in St. Patrick's own hand. The manuscript he had before him must thus have been three hundred years old at that time, and Ferdomnach tells us that it was so much de-

faced in some parts, that he had difficulty in making it out.

Another test of the age of an Irish manuscript, besides that derived from the sort of text it contains, is the style of the handwriting in which it is inscribed. The older form was called "uncial" writing, and in it, as in the Books of Durrow and Kells, the letters are round and separated one from another, and have the appearance of bold capitals; the later hand is called cursive or "miniscule"; in it the letters are smaller and run together, as in the Books of Dimma or Armagh. It used to be said that cursive writing began about the ninth century, and that up to that date all writing was uncial, but this is hardly borne out by facts even as regards the writing of Irish manuscripts.* We cannot, with safety, use either the test of handwriting or the test of the text by itself as a certain indication of the age of a manuscript, as it used to be considered safe to do. The fact that the Book of Durrow, the oldest of the existing Irish manuscripts of the Gospels, is also the purest Vulgate, shows that great caution is necessary. All we can say is, that though none of these tests, taken separately, is sufficient to establish the age of a document without

* Westwood, for instance, thinks that the Book of Dimma was written by a scribe who lived in the seventh century; yet the handwriting is cursive. It cannot, however, be said that the age of this manuscript has been definitely established.

doubt, yet when they are considered in connection with its language, and with any other data that may be afforded by the manuscript itself, or by contemporary historical records, they go a long way in deciding its approximate date; in some instances these investigations correct the traditions ascribing the copy to a particular author, while in others they remarkably confirm it.

The Gospels were not, in these older days, bound up together, as is customary at present; each stood alone, and was written and stitched separately. This agrees with the mention in the Life of St. Patrick in the Book of Lismore, that he "sowed the four books of the Gospel with a sowing of faith and belief and piety." You will remember, too, that when St. Ninnid found St. Ciaran reading, it was St. Matthew's Gospel only that he held in his hand, and which he gave to his fellow-student. When we hear, therefore, of the young pupils having in their satchels several books or "volumina," we are to understand that they contained perhaps one or more of the four Gospels, with possibly a psalter or other church books along with them. All were in Latin, the language of the Church. In the picture of the Evangelists in the Book of Deer, books in cases are suspended from their shoulders. Sometimes each Gospel had a separate "cumdach" or cover.

Many of the books of which we have been speaking are finely illuminated; sometimes a whole page is de-

voted to an elaborate design in colour, of great brilliance, and showing no sign of decay or fading with the lapse of centuries. So far back as 587 we hear of a scribe named Daig who was "a most skilful writer of books," and of St. Ultan, half a century later, as "a most accomplished writer and illuminator and scribe." Doubtless the art is an old one in Ireland, for the Book of Durrow, which we learned was a vi.-vii. century manuscript, is one of the most perfect specimens of Irish ornament, and shows that the designer was master of a well-known and long-practised art. What strikes us most in the character of the design of the Irish artists is the lack of models from nature. There is no sign of the adaptation of foliage, or fruit; no observation of trees or animals or even of the human form. Save a squirrel in the Book of Kells, and a tiny figure of a seated man in the corner of another page, there is hardly any sign that the scribe ever raised his head to glance at the world around him. His animals are monsters chasing each other in interminable turns and foldings, their tails in the mouth of the pursuing monster; they are grotesque reminiscences of snakes, or dogs, or birds, worked into a complicated design of spirals and whorls in which their forms are elongated and twisted in endless variety of interlacing, but never entirely lost sight of. It is the art of a race of monks whose ideal was, unlike that of the Cistercians, who in later days sought the most fertile and picturesque

valleys for their places of repose, the solitude of "a desert in the ocean," a lonely and isolated spot far from human society and the ways of men.

The simplicity of mind of these laborious scribes is well illustrated by the lines in Irish which occur at the close of the Gospels in the Book of Dimma, in which the writer asks as his reward for his labours only permission "to tend the herds, and crack nuts of the valley that will not poison him, with a righteous habitation."

Their art consisted not so much in a faithful reproduction of nature, or an artistic adaptation of her designs, as in that wonderful steadiness of hand which, in the space of a few inches or even in a fraction of an inch, could produce without faltering involutions and spirals so fine that they cannot be traced by the unaided eye, but require a magnifying-glass to follow out. The grace and elegance of these designs is marvellous, as well as the pitch of excellence required to produce them. No description could give any idea of their delicacy. At their head stands the famous Book of Kells, now in Trinity College, Dublin, in which Irish illumination is brought to its highest point of excellence. "How men could have had eyes and tools to work out the designs," writes Professor J. O. Westwood, one of our chief authorities on illuminated manuscripts, "I am sure I, with all the skill and knowledge of such kind of work that I have been exercising for the last fifty years, cannot conceive."*

* Lecture delivered before the members of the Oxford Architectural Society, by Professor Westwood, November, 1886.

CHAPTER XXII.

METAL-WORK SHRINES FOR MANUSCRIPTS, CROSIERS AND BELLS.

Authorities:—Miss Stokes' "Early Christian Art in Ireland," and monograph on the Cross of Cong; Wilde's "Descriptive Catalogue of the Antiquities in the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy;" Joyce's "Social History of Ireland;" Reeves, "On the Bell of St. Patrick," Trans. R. Irish Acad. 1877, etc.

As time went on these ecclesiastical monuments of an earlier day were enclosed in shrines or covers of great worth and beauty. A manuscript that had traditionally been ascribed to the founder of some famous monastery, either as its author or as its donor, was naturally regarded as a sacred possession, and no honour that could be bestowed upon it was felt to be wasted. It was upon these covers for sacred books and upon the shrines for bells, relics, and crosiers coming down from an earlier day, that the most precious art of the gold and silversmith was lavished, and the ecclesiastical metal work of Ireland is of peculiar elegance and delicacy. Some of the most famous of the book-covers or "cumdachs," as they were called, have unfortunately been lost, and it is curious that this should have occurred in the case of both of the chief illuminated manuscripts of the Columban Order which have come

down to us, the Book of Kells and the Book of Durrow. The loss of the cumdach of the former book happened very long ago, and is mentioned in the Annals. The entry runs as follows:—"A.D. 1006. The Great Gospel of Columcille was stolen at night from the western "erdomh" of the great Church of Ceannanus (Kells). This was the principal relic of the western world, on account of its singular cover; and it was found after twenty nights and two months, its gold having been stolen off it, and a sod over it."*

As we look upon the marvellous designs of the Book of Kells itself, which are still the wonder and despair of the illuminator, we marvel what the beauty of the "singular cover" must have been, which so overshadowed the glory of the pages, that all the value of the book is ascribed to it alone. What we have now is only that part of their treasure which the thieves despised as worthless for their purpose.

The Book of Durrow, though now without its shrine, is known once to have possessed one from an inscription written on the fly-leaf by Roderic O'Flaherty in 1677; he seems to have copied it from the case itself, which must therefore have been in existence at that date. "Columcille's prayer and blessing for Fland, son of Maelsechnaill, King of Ireland, by whom this case was made." Flann, or Fland, reigned between the years 877-916, when the Danish wars were

* Annals iv. Mast.

at their height, and as it is the first of several cumdachs mentioned in the Annals as having been made from the ix-th to the xii-th century and later, we may conclude that it was at this period of the Danish settlements that Irish metal-work as well as Irish Romanesque architecture and sculpturing on stone, attained its highest perfection. The inscriptions generally engraved on the shrines, stating by whom and for whom the case was made, are a means of dating a considerable number of them. They seem in all instances to be much later than the manuscripts they were designed to preserve. We cannot help feeling glad that some means of this kind was adopted to preserve them, when we learn that it was a custom for a valuable manuscript belonging to some well-known saint to be dipped into water, the water being then used to cure the diseases of cattle. If these interesting experiments had not so frequently been tried, we should no doubt have had a larger number of these precious relics of the past with us now. Such destruction, joined to the wear of age and to the devastations of the Northmen, had in Brian Boromhe's time so diminished the number of the "hosts of Ireland's books, the Calendars of the men of the Gael," of which the author of the "Calendar of Ængus" speaks in the eighth century, referring to one class of ecclesiastical documents only, that King Brian had to send abroad to get books to fill their places. It was, no

doubt, to preserve the remaining books that the metal covers were made at this time; the cumdach of the Book of Armagh dates from the tenth century; that of Molaise's Gospels dates from the early eleventh century; the cover of the "Cathach" from the close of the same century.

These valuable shrines, both those for books and those containing bells, relics, or crosiers, were placed under the care of a special custodian in the different families to which they belonged, and this honourable office became in most cases hereditary, and was retained in the family for generations.

For instance, the custodians of the Black Bell of St. Patrick were until recently the MacBeolans in Galway; those of the Crosier of St. Columba, at Durrow, the MacGeoghegans; those of the Book of St. Molling, the Kavanaghs; and so on. Each precious relic of the past that has come down to us was placed under the care of some responsible keeper, and no doubt it is to their pride in the relic, that its preservation is often due. Not only books, but crosiers and bells were adorned, by the reverence of later generations, with costly and carefully decorated coverings. The actual bell or staff that they conceal, which in many instances dates back to the early Christian period, is always of the simplest description. A plain unadorned crook of oak or of yew, reminds us that the crosier now encased in a rich covering was originally simply the traveller's

staff which accompanied the early saint in his wanderings, and not a true episcopal crosier, made as a symbol of office. One of St. Columcille's crosiers is still preserved, and it is said that he exchanged another with St. Kentigern, yet St. Columcille never was consecrated Bishop. The so-called crosier was the ordinary staff which the saint used to assist his progress from place to place; its simple form sufficiently demonstrates this.

The early bells also are of the most primitive kind; they are usually small hand-bells of iron, of quadrilateral form, and coated with bronze, with an iron handle; of this sort is the iron bell of St. Patrick, which is, as Miss Stokes says, "at once the most authentic and the oldest Irish (Christian) relic of metal-work that has descended to us. It possesses the singular merit of having an unbroken history through fourteen hundred years." This tiny primitive iron bell, sacred as an almost certainly authentic relic of the great apostle of Ireland, was in 1091 enshrined in a covering of great beauty by Donall O'Lochlin, King of Ireland (died 1121), and is now preserved in Dublin. It is called the "Bell of the Will," on account of its having been willed by the Saint to one of his companions.

Bells made wholly of bronze date from about the ninth century. It is on account of the extremely small size of all the bells that have been found in Ireland, that it seems improbable that the Round Towers were

used as bell-towers, in spite of their name, "Cloicthech;" these tiny tinkling bells could not have been heard at the foot of the tower. Often they are broken or chipped, and we hear in the Annals of the 'Gapped' or broken bell (bearnan) of St. Ciaran, the gapped bell of St. Keven, etc., so that the split or chip in some cases occurred very long ago. The making of adorned covers for bells is a purely Irish, and a very beautiful form of art; we find nothing of the same sort elsewhere. Though to us these bells seem as primitive and simple as they could well be, it would appear that a good deal was thought in their own day of the metal-workers who constructed them. The annalists give great praise to the skill of the artificers who made Patrick's bells, rude as we know them to have been. Their fame seems to have even extended outside their own country. We find in Welsh legend a curious story of an Irish spotted bell of peculiar sweetness, which the British saint and historian, Gildas, brought out of Ireland with him, on the occasion on which he went over to bring about some changes in the Irish monastic system, and which he intended to present to the Pope. On his way to Rome he spent a night with another saint of renown, St. Cadoc, at Llancarvan, and Cadoc was so delighted with the bell that he implored Gildas to leave it with him, offering to give him any price for it if he might have it. But Gildas had vowed to carry it to Rome,

and would not be persuaded to change his mind. The bell was duly presented to the Pontiff, but he sent it back to Wales, and it finally came into the keeping of St. Cadoc, who counted it as one of his two best possessions, the other being a missal, written for him by Gildas; its sweet sounds were his special joy and comfort. The fact that an Irish bell was thought to be a worthy gift to make to Pope Alexander, shows that these bells were held in high esteem.

Chalices of metal do not seem to have been in use in early times in Ireland; the oldest native chalices were of stone, and an ancient stone example was taken out of an early monastic cell on Blasket Island, off the Kerry coast. One exquisite specimen, however, comes to us from a later date, and is known as the Ardagh Chalice. It was turned up by a boy digging potatoes near Drogheda; its exact date cannot be determined, but it is a two-handled cup, of the form in use, Miss Stokes tells us, before the tenth century. It is of mixed silver and copper, and the ornament is of the finest gold filigree wirework, with enamelled beads or knobs. There are about forty different varieties of design on this cup alone, which is equally chaste in form and in ornamentation.

The last specimen which we can mention in this brief notice of the Irish ecclesiastical metal-work is the Cross of Cong, made for the purpose of enshrining a piece of the true Cross by Turlough O'Conor in 1123,

and presented by him to the Church of Tuam. The shaft of the cross measures 2 feet 6 inches in height; and the delicacy of its ornamentation shows that in the twelfth century Irish art had not yet declined from its supreme point of development.

The Cross of Cong was taken to Cong Abbey, probably by Roderic O'Conor, the last monarch of Ireland, about the year 1150, and after various vicissitudes, it has found a resting-place among the treasures of the National Museum, Dublin, of which it forms one of the greatest ornaments.

CHAPTER XXIII.

LEARNING AND LEARNED MEN.

Dictionaries of National and Ecclesiastical Biography; Hyde's "Literary History of Ireland;" "Ireland and the Celtic Church," by Professor George Stokes; Sigerson's "Bards of the Gael and Gall;" Zimmer's "The Irish Element in Mediæval Culture," etc.

THE irruption of the barbarians of the North into Italy and Gaul in the fifth century abruptly put an end to the culture of the Latin Empire. Even civilisation was threatened with decay, if not with extinction, in many parts of the Empire. The knowledge of Greek gradually declined, and even the scholarly cultivation of Latin seems to have been given up in the struggle for life or death between the Roman Empire and the Goths and Huns, between Christianity and Paganism.

When we are able to trace the gradual recovery from this condition of collapse, we find Gaul and Northern Italy sunk into a state of semi-barbarism in which learning and culture could not find ground for growth. Gregory of Tours at the close of the sixth century bewails the depravity of Gaul, and the general lack of knowledge. Prominent Churchman as he was, descended from a Roman family, and possessed of such learning as the age could provide, he yet has to confess

that in writing Latin, the language both of his nation and of the church, he often confounds the genders and cases, and is troubled by numerous grammatical difficulties. If this was the case with such a man as Gregory of Tours, the general standard of culture must have been at the lowest ebb. It was, indeed, impossible for culture to live in such an atmosphere as the France of the Merovingians.

The knowledge of Greek died out even in Italy so completely that it was the re-discovery of some ancient Greek documents more than eight centuries later which brought about the great revival of learning known as the Italian Renaissance. Between the fifth century and the fifteenth, the scholarship of Italy presents us with a blank so far as the study of the Greek language, literature, and art are concerned. Even Gregory the Great knew no Greek, and when, early in the ninth century, the learned Bishop of Turin, Claudius, who had received in Spain, his native country, a liberal education, was called upon to defend his views before an Italian assembly, it was Dungal, an Irishman, then President of the University of Pavia, who was required to answer him. Claudius declined, indeed, to plead before the Italian bishops, on the ground of their ignorance.

But in Ireland no such break occurred in the learned tradition of the past. Ireland lay outside the track of the Barbarians, and felt no shadow of their power fall

across it. The conquest of the Vandals and the Goths, who wedged themselves into Western and South-Western Europe, isolated Ireland to a large extent from the rest of Europe, and enabled it to preserve intact its ancient civilization. There was in Ireland no break with the past, the process of development was continuous and normal, and the culture of Ireland from the fifth to the tenth century was directly derived from the classical tradition of Aristotle and Cicero, of Virgil and Ovid, and from the ecclesiastical tradition of Origen and Cyprian, of Jerome and of Ambrose.

In many ways there was a similarity of tradition between Ireland and Spain, which can be proved by the close connection in their liturgies, by certain points of similarity in their versions of the Scriptures, above all, by their steady cultivation of Greek when it had died out of the rest of Europe. Britain, no doubt, shared the same conditions, but the destruction of its memorials by the ruthless havoc of the Saxons, has left us little material on which to base theories. It did not, as Ireland did under the Northmen, found new settlements in the heart of Europe and lay up there the records of its past. Had we only the materials left in Ireland itself by means of which to reconstruct the history of the eighth and ninth centuries, there would be many gaps in the record of her intellectual and spiritual progress; it is for this reason that the foreign records of

the Celtic church are of such inestimable value in any attempt to understand her history; their value has been hitherto but poorly appreciated by her people and her historians.

But scant as are the records for Britain, they go to prove that there also the classical tradition remained. There is a legend, or perhaps we may call it a record, that St. Brendan, visiting St. Gildas of Wales, found him using, in the celebration of the Mass, a Greek service-book, and there seems no doubt that in the quotations from the Scriptures that we find in his writings, he had corrected his Latin version by the Greek.*

As far back as we can go in the history of the Irish Church, we find the study of Greek part of the regular monastic curriculum. The Abbot Aileran of Clonard, writing about 660 a curious work on the mystical meaning of the names in our Lord's genealogy, quotes familiarly from Origen, Jerome, Philo, and Augustine; he displays in his ingenious treatise a knowledge of Latin, Greek, and possibly of Hebrew.

So the learned commentator, Sedulius, who was Abbot of Kildare about 820, "makes parade," as a French writer says, "of his Greek learning." In his

* Prof. Hugh Williams notes that the same attempt has been made in some early Lives of St. Cadoc and St. David. Paper on "The Christian Church in Wales," *Transactions of the Cymmrodorian Society*, 1903-4, p. 79.

commentaries he quotes Eusebius, Augustine, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, and the Gospel of the Hebrews. He corrects his Latin New Testament by a Greek original, and he refers to the Hebrew readings. He composed a grammatical treatise on the basis of Priscian and Donatus, and a treatise on government, which was discovered by Cardinal Mai in the Vatican Library. It is probable that his treatise on government was composed for the instruction of Charlemagne's grandson, Charles the Bald, for whom he wrote numerous poems; for he had sought the French Court in the days of the great Emperor, and was appointed to an important post at Liége, where he remained for many years. He arrived there one winter's day, through deeply drifted snow, exhausted by hunger and fatigue; but he received such a welcome as he was entitled to on account of his gifts and learning, and soon entered on his professional duties. He continued at Liége from 840-860, and died soon afterwards at Milan. He tells us that many "learned grammarians" of his countrymen were studying under his tuition at Liége. When Charles the Bald visited the monastery which he had helped to make renowned, Sedulius Scotus or the "Irishman," as he was called, presented a poem in his honour. He was not only a man of exceptional erudition and versatility, he was also a graceful Latin poet. His charming verses on the "Lily and the Rose," in which both flowers contend in rivalry for the palm of

beauty, is worthy of Thomas Moore. In the first stanza the Poet addresses the flowers thus :—

Ciclica quadrifidis currebant tempora metis,
Uernabat uario tellus decorataque peplo,
Lactea cum roseis certabant lilia sertis,
Cum rosa sic croceo sermones prompserat ore;

after which the flowers reply in turn, in several succeeding verses.*

But we can trace the learning of the Irish monks to an even earlier date than either of these writers. We have still existing a treatise composed in three books by an Irish monk, named Augustine, on the "Marvels of Holy Writ." He lived and wrote about 655 A.D., and the identity of his name with that of the great St. Augustine of Hippo, has led to a belief that the work was by the African Father. His treatise was long bound up with the works of St. Augustine. He dedicates this work to "The most reverend Bishops and Priests of the cities and monasteries, especially of Carthage," an interesting hint of the friendly relations existing in the seventh century between Ireland and the churches of Africa. † The Latin is superior to that

* This Sedulius is not to be confused with the fifth century poet of the same name, who wrote the "Carmen Paschale."

† The Benedictine editors propose to substitute "Canterbury" for "Carthage" (Migne, tom. 35, p. 2148). But see Dr. Reeves' interesting argument on this point in the Proc., R.I. Academy, vol. vii., 1857.

of many later writers, to that of the Scribe of the Book of Armagh, of Columbanus, or even of Adamnan. If would seem that in later times the pure latinity of the earliest days of monastic culture became degraded, but the Latin of the Celtic Church at all times ranked somewhat above the general level of the literary products of the age.

The same tone of vigorous scholarship is found in a letter written about twenty-five years before the date of Augustine's book by Cummian to the then Abbot of Iona on the subject of the date of keeping Easter, that old controversy which cropped up again and again in the Irish Church of the seventh and eighth centuries. In this Epistle, Cummian, an Irish Abbot, shows himself perfectly familiar with the calendars of the East and of Rome, and quotes the decrees of the Councils of Nicæa and of Arles, besides the opinions of the early Fathers, and of the early Saints of Ireland. He is most anxious that Ireland should conform to the Roman custom in celebrating Easter, then generally accepted and established throughout the Church, but not yet adopted in Iona. He ends his letter with these sarcastic words :—" What can be thought worse concerning the Church, our mother, than that we should say that Rome errs, Jerusalem errs, Alexandria errs, Antioch errs, the whole world errs; the Scots (Irish) and Britons alone know what is right?"* And to

* See Ussher's Works, t. iv., pp. 432-443.

strengthen his argument, he refers to the visit of some Irish delegates to Rome three years before, in the year 631, when they found that there was a whole month's difference between the time that Easter was being kept in Rome, and the time of its celebration in Ireland. They kept the festival that year in Rome on March 24th, and returned home to find it being held on April 21st in Ireland.

No doubt this letter of Cummian's had much effect in bringing about the reform he so earnestly desired, and which was manifestly necessary in the interests of harmony of worship, but the point to which we wish to direct attention here, is that we have an unbroken tradition through the four writers of whom we have spoken, Cummian, Augustine, Aileran, and Sedulius, reaching from the middle of the seventh century to the middle of the ninth, proving an intimacy with the ecclesiastical literature of the Roman, Eastern, and Egyptian Churches, and also of that of Gaul. The writings of Cassian, the founder of monasticism in Southern Gaul, and of St. Martin and Gregory of Tours, are constantly referred to. So also are those of St. Ambrose of Milan, with which church there seems to have been a friendly connection. They also show evidence of an acquaintance with Greek and Hebrew literature. Earlier than any of these, we have the Latin poems of St. Columbanus, notably the charming epistle to his friend Fedolius, in Adonic verse, in

which he prays him not to despise "these little verses by which Sappho loved to charm her contemporaries." His writings show everywhere the marks of a broad classical scholarship. Earlier again come the Latin poems of St. Columba, the hymn of Secundinus to St. Patrick, and the Christian epic, "Carmen Paschale," composed by the fifth century Sedulius. But the best proof of the high level of Irish education is obtained from the libraries of the Irish monasteries abroad, of which we shall have to speak in a later chapter; these show us that this classical education was no mere veneer acquired by a few rare spirits, but that a wide study of classical literature formed the basis of the ordinary curriculum of the great Irish monasteries. St. Columbanus took out from Bangor Mór, in the North of Ireland, a knowledge of Latin scholarship, and to this he added some acquaintance, at least, with Greek literature. The library of his monastery of Bobio contains abundant proof that this classical tradition founded in his day never died out there.

In time to come, the Irish monasteries, amid the universal downfall of classical studies, were destined to hold up in Europe an older and more cultured ideal. In ecclesiastical matters, the knowledge of the Greek Testament, and the retention of certain peculiarities in the liturgies derived from a once universal Greek rite, point in the same direction to continuity of development; they show us that in the Irish Church

we have no sudden late irruption of classical ideas, but that here alone in Europe, there was preserved an unbroken classical tradition, coming down from the early days of Irish Christianity, and carried on without a gap into the tenth century or later. Indeed the native classical tradition cannot be said ever to have died out, so long as Ireland had any home-bred education at all. The Irish poets of the sixteenth century babble as familiarly of Helen of Troy, of Mars, or of Venus, as they do of Deirdre, of Cuchulain, or of any other of the native heroes and heroines. It cannot be said that this classical culture went very deep; it lay on the surface of the native literature, but it did not transform it. The classical reminiscences are chiefly employed in the way of analogy and comparison; they did not seriously affect the Irish style of writing. Just as in the history of the time, we find flowing on side by side the native romances of the chiefs, and the more ordered records of ecclesiastical affairs, of which this little volume affords an example, so in Irish literature we have the classical tradition and the native tradition, existing at the same time, but, except perhaps in certain matters of verse-structure, not apparently greatly influencing one another. With a few intrusions of foreign ideas, chiefly, it would seem, of legends and fables, Irish literature developed along its own well-marked lines; it preserved from beginning to end, in spite of its connection with the monasteries, its native note, a note so

distinctive, that it can never be mistaken, and one that seems to come from a far earlier stratum of civilisation than that of the monks and their teaching.

In the later ecclesiastical writings, when they are professedly written in Irish, we find a curious jumble of the native tongue with Latin phrases intermixed. The writers take every opportunity of showing off their Latin scholarship. This occurs both in the religious and secular literature; it is especially noticeable in the prefaces to the Book of Hymns of the Ancient Irish Church, where the hymns are chiefly in Latin, but the preface to each hymn, explaining its origin and purpose, is in a curious mixture of the two languages which the ecclesiastical writer had equally at his command. Nearly all the great saints were hymn-writers ; and a great number of hymns ascribed to them still remain. They are of very different quality, and were more often written as charms against diseases or possible dangers, than from pure love of song. A few of them, however, are worthy anthems of praise.*

Let us speak a little further of the Irish scholars who in the ninth and tenth centuries kept alive the torch of learning and passed it on to Europe.

Among philosophers the first to be mentioned must always be John Scotus Erigena. An Irishman abroad seems always to have retained his distinctive title of

* See "The Irish Liber Hymnorum," edited by Bernard and Atkinson, and published by the Henry Bradshaw Society, 1898.

"Scotus," or the "Irishman"; and this title made an easy excuse for a sort of poor punning which seems to have been fashionable. It was tempting to leave out one letter of the name, and turn Scot into "sot," as Theodulf, the Spaniard, did when he attacked an Irish monk with whom he was not on friendly terms; or to throw in their faces the reproach that they were "reared on Scotch porridge," as St. Jerome, and, after him, many another did, when provoked by the spirit or the turbulence of the Irish intruder. John Scotus neatly turned the tables on one occasion when dining with Charles the Bald at the French Court, for the King, who loved John, having asked him merrily, "What is the distance between a Scot and a Sot?" got the not very courtly reply, "The distance of the table only." "A man, little in person, but of merry wit," writes William of Malmesbury of John; and he tells with delight the honour in which the quick-tongued Irishman was held by the future Emperor of the Franks, and the closeness of their familiarity both in their studies and in ordinary life. The French Court of this age, the age of Charlemagne's revival of learning, must have been crowded with Irishmen, who were always sure of a welcome and of some post suitable to their abilities and learning.

John was one of the boldest speculators of the middle ages. He launched forth tracts and books that were so far in advance of the thought of his day, that they

were again and again condemned. Yet in spite of opposition, he continued to be rightly regarded as one of the leading spirits of his time. His great philosophical work, "De Divisione Naturæ," is written in the form of a dialogue, and all Europe talked of it and of its author. He seems to have been sent for by Alfred of England to come over to him, but Charles the Bald, his fast friend and protector, would never allow him to leave him. John never took Orders;* he is remarkable as being the first layman who for a long period had excelled in scholarship. His great excellence lay in his knowledge of Greek, in which he far surpassed all the learned men of his time. He understood Aristotle in the original, and wrote verses in the Greek language. His translation of the works of so-called Dionysius the Areopagite, made at the command of Charles the Bald, for the new Abbey of St. Denys, threw the Librarian of the Roman Library into the deepest astonishment. "It is wonderful," he exclaims, "that this uncivilized man, dwelling on the confines of the world, should have been able to understand such things and to translate them into another tongue."

But it was not only in classical studies that Irishmen of the ninth century stood in the fore-front of the knowledge of their time. They were also geographers and mathematicians. Virgil of

* So says his friend, Prudentius, bishop of Troyes. In *De Rebus Gestis Ælfridi*, however, he is said to have been "a priest or monk."

Salzburg has the double reputation of being a great geometer and a great missionary. At home he had been Abbot of Aghaboe, and his name in Ireland was Fergal, changed abroad into the Latin, Virgilius. He must have been beloved at home, for he is one of the few of the great host of Irish teachers who went abroad who was still remembered in the annals and martyrologies of their native land. His death is recorded in the Annals of Ulster under the year 784. On going to France, he was recommended to Odilo, Grand Duke of Bavaria, by the Emperor Pepin, to fill the See of Salzburg. He had already achieved a reputation before leaving Ireland, for he was known there as the "Geometrician"; from his Greek studies he had learned the theory that the earth is a sphere, and that there are antipodes. This theory, which is taught to every school-child in our own days, was not then understood, and was thought to be a dangerous and false doctrine. Still, in spite of opposition, he maintained that the earth was round and that the sun and moon passed beneath it; and that there must be inhabitants at the other side. He was condemned over and over again for teaching so novel a theory, but nothing was done to him, and he seems to have gone on quietly with the administration of his diocese, occasionally startling the mediæval world with the new knowledge that he wrought out in his study in the intervals of his episcopal work.

An almost more interesting man was Dicuil, who

lived about 820 or later, and wrote in his old age a geographical work called "De Mensura Orbis Terræ." This work was discovered in the French National Library by M. Letronne, about 1812, and published by him.

Dicuil was a very intelligent man, and his book is full of interesting details; he was not content with merely compiling an account of the world's geography from the records of the classical writers, though he quotes Solinus, Pliny, Priscian, Isidore of Seville, and many others, but he is at great pains to find out at first-hand any new material which could be contributed by travellers through little-known regions. The Island of Iceland, for instance, was not discovered and peopled by the Norsemen until 874, but Dicuil, who probably wrote half a century before this, gives us a long account of it. He corrects the usual supposition that the island was surrounded with a sea of ice, but he says that one day's voyage north of the land the voyagers had come upon the frozen ocean, when they went North in the depth of winter. He describes, among other interesting details, the long days near the solstice, when "the sun hardly disappeared at all, but seemed only to hide itself behind a hill, so that, even during its short absence, the light of day does not fail." All this, he says, he heard from some Irish anchorites who had visited the island over thirty years before, and had stayed there from the month of Feb-

ruary to August. The account he here gives remarkably bears out the tradition found in the Landnamabók, the Icelandic "Doomsday Book," or history of the early settlements made there by the Norsemen, which says that when they arrived in the island, they found already there "Irish books, bells, and crosiers."

This passage is so interesting, as bearing on the wanderings of the Irish anchorites, that we will quote it. It occurs in the Prologue of this old Icelandic book:—"Before Iceland was peopled from Norway, there were in it men whom the Northmen called 'Papae';* they were Christian men, and it is held that they must have come over-sea from the West, for there were found left by them Irish books, bells, and crosiers, and more things besides from which it could be understood that they were Westmen; these things were found East in Pap-isle, and it is stated in English books that in those times voyages were made between those countries." It is an important testimony to the truth of this Icelandic record, to find that Dicuil had conversed with some of these very same hardy Irish explorers. He had also met a "monk worthy of trust" who had landed on the Faroe Isles after having navigated "two days and a summer's night in a little vessel of two

* Three isles in the Hebrides, two in the Orkneys, two in the Shetlands, and others among the Faroes are called Papæ, or "Father," whence Paplay, or "the Hermit's abode;" they seem to have been the cells of Irish anchorites.

banks of oars,' who found that they also had been inhabited near a hundred years before "by eremites who had gone out of our Ireland (Scotia), but that the inroads of the Northmen had driven them away, since which time they were inhabited by an innumerable multitude of sheep and sea-birds." The sheep were doubtless the descendants of those introduced into the islands and reared by the Irish hermits.

We must bring these stories of the learned men of ancient Ireland to an end. Enough has been said to show that from the seventh to the ninth century Ireland worthily maintained her reputation for a high and liberal culture, and that she did her best to spread this culture among the nations of Western Europe. Nor was the same wide education wanting at home. Aldhelm, the learned teacher at Malmesbury, a monastery founded by the Irish monk, Maildulf, and long frequented by Irish pupils, complains towards the close of the seventh century, that though so good an education was then provided in England, the Anglo-Saxon youths preferred to take their schooling in the Irish monasteries. "Why," he exclaims, in a letter addressed to three young men just returned from Ireland, "does Ireland pride herself upon a sort of priority, in that such numbers of students flock there from England, as if here upon this fruitful soil there were not an abundance of Argive and Roman masters to be found, fully capable of solving the deepest problems of religion and satisfying the most ambitious students?"

The exact curriculum of studies in an Irish monastic school we shall deal with in a separate chapter on their libraries; here we will give one story to illustrate the wild character of some of these Irish students. Archbishop Theodore, who came to England from Rome in 664, had some sharp passages with them in his school at Canterbury. Aldhelm, who was a student at the time, describes how they baited their teacher. But the Archbishop was more than a match for them. Aldhelm writes to a friend, "He treated them as the truculent boar treats the Molossian hounds. He tore them with the tusk of grammar, and shot them with the deep and sharp syllogisms of chronography, till they cast away their weapons and hurriedly fled to the recesses of their dens." In Malmesbury itself a worse thing happened; a teacher named John (who has been confused with John Scotus Erigena) so irritated his pupils that they set on him with the sharp iron stiles with which they wrote, and inflicted on him a wound of which he died. Poor teacher John was buried at the Abbey, and on his tomb he is described as a "holy sophist and martyr." His sophistry seems to have been no protection against the more carnal weapons of his rebellious students, who were evidently as ready for a "row" at Malmesbury in the ninth century as are their successors of Trinity College or of the Royal University in the twentieth. But a "row" was even more dangerous in days when the "stilus" took the place of the modern squib.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IRISH LIBRARIES ABROAD.

Authorities—"The Irish Element in mediæval Culture," by Dr Heinrich Zimmer. For the Bohio Library, catalogues published by Muratori and Peyron; Miss Stokes' "Six Months in the Appennines." For the Library of St. Gall, Ferdinand Keller's "Bilder und Schriftszüge in den Irischen Manuscripten der Schweizerischen Bibliotheken," 1851; Wordsworth and White, "Old Latin Biblical Texts." M. D'Arbois' "Catalogue de la Littérature Epique" is most useful here as elsewhere, but needs some revision.

It is evident from the large donations of books which some of these monks made to the great monastic libraries, that they were possessed of considerable private collections of manuscripts. For instance, Abbot Grimald, who presided over the Irish monastery of St. Gall from 854-872, contributed thirty-five manuscripts of his own to the library of the monastery, and Dungal of Pavia bequeathed forty-two to the library of Bobio earlier in the same century. Some of Dungal's books are now in the Ambrosian Library of Milan; they are dedicated in his own handwriting, and he speaks in them of his connection with the Monastery of Bobio. Yet, in spite of possessing a private library from which he could contribute so many important books to the general fund, he often complains of his want of reference books, especially of his need of the work of Pliny the younger.

Dungal was a very remarkable man. He left Ireland about the year 780, and came to the Court of Charlemagne, where he became lecturer and teacher to the Royal Household. He was poet, theologian, and astronomer, and became the close friend of Charlemagne, to whom he wrote a letter that is still extant, explaining the two solar eclipses that had taken place shortly before. In a poem written to the Emperor to celebrate his victory over the Grand Duke of Bavaria, in 789, he calls himself the "Irish Exile" ("Hibernicus Exul"). At the request of Charlemagne's grandson, Lothaire, he passed on into Italy, some time early in the ninth century, to found the school of Pavia, a school which acquired great celebrity under his presidency, and from which issued many scholars whose names are still remembered. It speedily attracted students from all the surrounding states. He was succeeded at the French Court by another Irishman, Clemens, who was tutor to the future Emperor, Lothaire, and who is spoken of in the court records as the "Instructor to the Imperial Court" ("Magister palatinus"). It was while he was in Italy that he had his celebrated controversy with the learned Spanish Bishop, Claudius, on the subject of the western iconoclasm. He was not only a poet himself, but a student of Latin poetry; he greatly esteemed Virgil, and was acquainted with the early Christian poets, such as Prudentius and Fortunatus.

His last days were spent at Bobio, for which he proved his affection by the gift of his precious manuscripts. It is probably that the Antiphonary of Bangor, which contains a large collection of hymns, prayers, and canticles of the Irish Church, was brought out from the monastery of Bangor Mór, St. Comgall's foundation in the North of Ireland, by Dungal, and presented by him to the Bobio Library.

Let us imagine we are in the library of Bobio or in that of any other Irish Monastery in the ninth century. It is in many respects very unlike our modern libraries. There are no shelves with rows of books, but instead there are hanging round the wall on wooden hooks numerous leathern satchels each containing a parchment manuscript, often beautifully written, and in a few cases possibly illuminated. The satchels are of embossed leather, adorned with Celtic designs; many of them still remain, and are to be seen in the museums in Dublin, one in Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and elsewhere.

The fall of these book-satchels was considered a sign of mourning or of some ill event. It is said that when a certain man called Longarad, "a sage of every science" who lived in Ossory, died, all the book-satchels of Erin fell down that night. St. Columba wrote a little poem of two stanzas inshrining this event, which Dr. Sigerson has thus translated in the metre of the original:—

Dead is Lón
Of Kilgarad; make ye moan.
Now must Erinn's tribes deplore,
Loss of lore and schools o'erthrown.

Died hath Lón
Of Kilgarad; make ye moan.
Loss of lore and schools o'erthrown,
Leave all Erinn's borders lone.*

Although the manuscripts are not visible to the eye as the visitor enters, he will have no difficulty in finding the book he wants, for a complete catalogue of the library lies on the table, and the learned librarian can in a moment pick out any manuscript that is required.

One of these catalogues still exists, and it gives us a great deal of valuable information about the origin and growth of the Bobio Library.† It was written in the tenth century, and is attributed to Gerbert, who was Abbot between the years 967-972, and who afterwards became Pope Silvester II. It contains a list of seven hundred volumes, 479 of which had been acquired gradually from various unstated sources, and over 220 had been presented by scholars who are named, with the lists of the books they had given.

* See "Bards of the Gael and Gall," page 161.

† Muratori, *Antiquitates Italicæ*, fol. ed., vol i; Dissertatio 43 pp. 493-505.

Of these, 43 were the bequest of Dungal ("Dungalus præcipuus Scottorum"), 32 were given by a presbyter named Theodore, 4 by "Brother Adelbert," and so on. If we inquire further, what the books consisted of, we shall find among them most of the names of the great classic writers. A peep into the satchels will show us both Greek and Latin writings; there are here copies of Horace, Virgil, Ovid, Juvenal, Martial, Persius, and of Flaccus, a satirist of the early years of the Christian era, besides the works of Terence, Cicero, Demosthenes and Aristotle. Some of them have commentaries or are crowded with notes, partly written in Irish. There are several copies of the Gospels among the books, probably each Gospel being contained in a separate case, and copies also of the Acts of the Holy Apostles, of the First Epistle of St. Peter, and of the Epistle of St. James, of all of which some fragments remain, and are at the Imperial Library of Vienna. The most sacred of all these sacred writings in the eyes of the tenth century librarian, as in our own eyes to-day, would be the copy of the Gospels belonging to the founder, and carried by him in his wallet. We give the actual inscription which incorporates this old tradition:—"Ut traditum fuit illud erat idem liber quem Beatus Columbanus Abbas in pera secum ferre consuevat." The text is written by a man who seems to have been very ignorant of Latin, but better acquainted with the Greek characters. Of even greater interest

to scholars, is the document called the Muratorian Fragment, which was found at Milan by Muratori in the year 1740, but which came originally from Bobio. This manuscript is a collection of extracts from various authors, made about the eighth century, and the most important portion is that which contains a list of the Canon of the New Testament, copied apparently from a very early Greek manuscript by a scribe who translated it into indifferent Latin. This, being the oldest formal list of the books of the New Testament extant, is naturally of the greatest value and importance.

The Bobio Library has been sadly lost and scattered. There are four catalogues existing of its contents, showing a sad diminution of the collection as time went on. In the tenth century there were nearly 700 manuscripts; in 1461, when the next catalogue was made, there were hardly 240 to include, *i.e.*, 170 classical and ecclesiastical works, etc., and 67 antiphonaries and service-books; and soon after this time, about 1493-4, two large raids were made on the collection, first by Georgius Merula, who carried off many books, and later by Thomas Phaedrus Inghirami, a scriptor in the Vatican Library at Rome, who unfortunately did not dispose of many of his treasures to that collection, where they would have been safely guarded. A fourth list of books made for Pope Paul V. in 1618, shows that some manuscripts still remained at Bobio at that date, but since then they have been scattered over

Europe, and are to be found at Turin, Milan, Vienna, and elsewhere.*

There are also in existence two commentaries of great interest, which once belonged to Bobio; a complete commentary on the Psalter and fragments of another on St. Mark's Gospel. Both these commentaries were ascribed to St. Jerome, but it is now thought that they were the work of the founder, St. Columbanus. There is no doubt that St. Columbanus did write a commentary on the Psalms, for it is mentioned in the old catalogue as among the manuscripts then in the library; and the Irish scribe, who has added plentiful notes to this copy, does not recognise it as the work of St. Jerome.†

The libraries of the Irish monasteries of Würzburg and Reichenau, seem also to have been large and important, and many of the existing Irish manuscripts come from these two monasteries. Unfortunately no old catalogue seems to remain of the Würzburg collection, but of that at Reichenau (Augia Major) on Lake Constance, a catalogue was made while Erlebald was Abbot, between the years 822-838, in which 415 manu-

* Peyron, *Ciceronis orationum pro Scauro*, etc., 1824.

† This Latin Commentary on the Psalms is at Milan, and is marked Codex Ambrosianus C. 301. The commentary on St. Mark was discovered by Peyron, and placed by him in the University Library at Turin. Both have copious Irish glosses. See Stokes' and Strachan's *Thesaurus Palæohibernicus* and *Goidelica*, and Zeuss' *Grammatica Celtica*.

scripts are recorded, thirty of which were written there in Erlebald's time. At Carlsruhe is a copy of Priscian, the grammarian, which dates from the ninth century, and which came from Reichenau, besides the works of Bæda, which appear to have been much studied in the Irish monasteries, for several copies have been found of them. Priscian's works seem also to have been regarded with great favour, for at least three other copies have been discovered in Irish monasteries. At St. Paul, in Carinthia, is a portion of a commentary on Virgil's Æneid, also from the Reichenau Library, besides a treatise on astronomy, some Irish poems and Latin hymns, and Greek vocabularies and paradigms.

Among other classical writings which have been gathered from Irish collections, are a copy of Servius' Commentary on Virgil and a fragment of Ovid's Metamorphoses, now at Berne; two important texts of Virgil now at Paris and at Florence; and the *De Conjugatione* of Eutychius at Paris and Vienna. These Irish copies have in several instances served as the base of the most reliable modern editions of these poets and writers.

But the only library that could vie with that of Bobio in extent and in the value of its manuscripts was that of St. Gall, founded by the friend and companion of Columbanus in the Canton now known by his name. Here, at least, in spite of losses and thefts, and in spite of the dissipation of its contents in various

European collections, the monastery and its library still remain, and some of its ancient treasures may yet be seen in their original resting-places. The manuscripts of St. Gall were famous throughout the middle ages, and it was to its satchels that the Fathers of the Council of Constance had recourse for the theological works of which they had need for reference during their sittings. Alas, they were not over-scrupulous in returning the precious manuscripts when the meeting was over, and many of the volumes appear to have been lost in consequence. We possess, as at Bobio, an early catalogue of the contents of this library. It was drawn up between the years 800-850. The removal of the bones of St. Gall in 835 to the new church is mentioned in one of the manuscripts.

In Abbot Grimald's time (854-872) important additions were made to the collection. The Abbot presented thirty-five volumes from his own private collection to the College Library, and seventy other additional manuscripts were acquired. Altogether, it possessed in the ninth century the great total of 533 volumes, nine of them being palimpsests.

The monastery of St. Gall attained its high position as a school of learning in the time of Moengal, its Abbot, who was presiding over St. Gall about the same time as John Scotus Erigina was lecturing in the Royal School at Paris, Sedulius Scotus at Liége, and Findan, a native of Leinster, a dreamer who heard on the banks

of the Rhine visionary voices calling to him in the ancient Irish of his mother-land, at the monastery of Rheinau, near Schaffhausen. The middle of the ninth century, when these men lived, was the golden age of Irish learning. The disturbance of their monasteries at home through the onslaughts of the Norsemen, which broke up the schools and rendered life and property unsafe, turned their thoughts to the already existing Irish foundations abroad. Everywhere they went, they spread that light of learning which had hitherto been confined in its display to Ireland. They were everywhere received with honour, and placed in positions of influence and trust. They carried back to Europe the knowledge of Greek of which it had been deprived by the devastations of the Goths, and a wider culture in the classics, as in science and theology, than was common on the Continent at the time. Their monasteries became centres of learning, and the boldness and modernness of their speculations made them both respected and dreaded in their day. In many departments they proved themselves to be leaders of thought, as well as skilled exponents of the science of their time. They were careful grammarians, learned theologians, and boldly speculative geographers. They combined the study of polite letters with a knowledge of geometry and astronomy; and they did their utmost to spread the interest in these and kindred studies throughout Western Europe, laying thereby a founda-

tion upon which modern civilisation could be built up.

It is not surprising, when we think of the condition of the country at home, to find that many of these "Hibernian exiles," when they left for ever their native land, carried with them their books. As Dungal enriched the libraries of Pavia and Bobio, so Moengal, on arriving at St. Gall, where he was soon to become Abbot, deposited in its library his volumes, so laboriously transported half-way across Europe by the care of himself and his companions. There are still existing documents of his bearing various dates up to 865. Life at St. Gall under Marcellus, or the "Little Mark," as they called him in stately Latin, must have been a pleasant thing. Marcus was a great musician, and he taught music as well as the severer studies. He gave it the highest place among the arts, and under his guidance, the musical school of St. Gall reached high perfection. He must have taught the Irish harp among other instruments, for his pupil, Tuotilo, is said to have been unsurpassed in all kinds of stringed instruments and pipes, and gave lessons on them to the sons of the nobility in a room set apart for him by the Abbot.* He is said to have been "in divinis et

* It is interesting to learn that in their efforts to re-establish upon the soundest principles the use of plain-song in the Catholic services, the Benedictine monks of Solesmes are using the musical manuscripts from St. Gall, which date from the time when Moengal taught music in the school. It is said, however, that Church psalmody had been previously introduced into St. Gall by a Roman Ecclesiastic.

humanis eruditissimus," learned in both theology and secular science; and many noted scholars at different times resorted to the school upon which he had impressed his spirit. Notkar and Ratpert were there, and both fell victims to the plague of 1022.

In the tenth century St. Gall was seized by the Magyars, but it rose again, and is to be found on its ancient site at the present day.

To quote a paragraph of Zimmer's which justly states the case:—"Dungal, Johannes Scotus, Clemens, Sedulius, and Moengal are representatives of a higher culture than was to be found on the Continent of their day; to a purely Christian training and a severely simple habit of mind, they joined the highest theoretical attainments, based upon a thorough knowledge of the best standards of classical antiquity. These Irishmen had a high mission entrusted to them, and they faithfully accomplished their task."*

Let us note a few of the treasures which St. Gall has contributed to the libraries of Europe. Most important of all is a Greek copy of St. Paul's Epistles, with a translation in Latin between the lines, now at the Royal Library of Dresden.† It dates from the ninth

* "The Irish Element in Mediæval Culture" by Heinrich Zimmer, p. 103

† This Greek version with Latin interlinear translation is known as Codex Bœrnerianus. It was published by Ch-Fred. Matthaei in 1791.

century, and was therefore probably acquired in Moengal's time. It does not contain the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in this it agrees with the list of St. Paul's Epistles given in the Muratorian Fragment, although part of the Book is included in the Irish copy of the Epistles found at Würzburg. Besides this, several very ancient fragments of the Gospels are found among the St. Gall manuscripts. They are gathered together in one volume, which also contains the famous St. Gall palimpsest of Virgil.

In 1416, Poggio, a Florentine scholar, with two friends, visited St. Gall Library to seek for some missing volumes of Cicero and Livy. They found there eight of Cicero's orations, with commentaries by Asconius Pedianus, a grammarian of Padua, who lived early in the first century of the Christian era; also the "Argonauticon" of Flaccus, copies of Priscian, Lucretius, and other works of antiquity. Without ceremony, they quietly carried off the treasures they had found, two wagon-loads, first to Constance, then into Italy, but none of them were returned to St. Gall. In the year 1900, when an inventory was taken, only one of the thirty volumes mentioned in the catalogue of the ninth century as written in Irish script remained; and the six volumes made up of stray sheets and fragments of old manuscripts, shows not only the losses which the library has sustained, but the carelessness of the thieves in handling these rare old texts. The "Vocabularius

S. Galli," written in the Irish hand, "libri scottice scripti," bears the date 780; this "Irish hand" fell, as we saw. into disuse about the ninth century.

Thus Ireland took an honourable place both in the missionary activity and the intellectual advance of the vii-ixth centuries, but it would be to mis-read the history of the time to suppose that in either branch of vitality she stood alone. To travel no farther than the sister-island, in the domain of intellectual knowledge the names of Bede and Alcuin are even more illustrious than those of Dungal and Erigena, and, in tender memories, the work and character of the Celtic teachers of Britain, St. Chad, St. Cuthbert, and St. Kentigern, come little behind those of St. Columcille and St. Finnian, while the early Irish church gladly acknowledged her debt to the controlling brain of St. Gildas and St. Cadoc.

In missionary enthusiasm, Winfrid or Boniface (to give him his official name), and Willibrord, the Apostles of the tribes of lower Germany in the vii-viiith century, came not a whit behind St. Columbanus and St. Fridolen, and though they were men of a different type, and often came into collision with the Irish preachers, their zeal and labours cannot fail to command our respect.

On the Continent too, a revival of learning, much stimulated by the intellectual energy of Charlemagne, took place about the close of the eighth century, and

even the Irish-founded monasteries, and, in particular, that of St. Gall, owe much of their renown to the foreign pupils who crowded to their schools. Some of St. Gall's most noted Abbots, as well as several of her most distinguished scholars, were Germans. Both the Celtic and Teutonic element contributed their share to her fame.

Irish achievement does not lose anything by being assigned its just place in the history of the development of Western Europe. In all healthy progress there has been the mutual interaction of various nationalities, and to the general advance each has contributed its quota, the offspring of its own special characteristics and national life.

The contribution of Ireland to the general whole was not, as some have thought, an isolated phenomenon, but it was not for that reason the less worthy of recognition. As a place of comparative quiet amid an almost universal turmoil, Ireland became a land of retirement in which the student might fit himself by study and meditation for his life's work; while the active and vigorous temperament of its people would not permit him to remain in a luxurious repose, but pushed him forward to take his place in that outward movement in which Ireland at an early date took a foremost part.

In considering the achievement of Ireland in these ages the Irish student of history may not only feel a legitimate pride in the past, but may possibly reflect that the best work of a nation is accomplished, not by

isolating itself in a sense of self-conscious superiority, the most deadening of all moods of the mind, but in adding its torch of religious fervour, of artistic endeavour, and of intellectual impulse, to the common flame in whose light the nations walk.

By the same Author.

PAGAN IRELAND.

Epochs of Irish History—I.

In her "Epochs of Irish History," Miss Hull is doing a valuable and patriotic work in bringing the early history of our country before the general reader in such an interesting and concise manner. The first volume, which is now before us, deals with the 'Social Life in Pagan Ireland,' and with the Romance of the Early Kings. . . . Miss Hull speedily breaks through the veil of tradition, and, in the region of well-authenticated fact, her story is both well told and well worth the telling. We have vivid pictures of what sort of place early Ireland was to live in, how the people talked, how they administered justice, how they quarrelled and fought, how they treated their women folk, and how they trained up their children in the way they should go. The stories are told in a fine literary style, and the book would make an excellent story reader for the higher classes, especially in schools where Irish is taught.—"School Monthly" (Dublin).

We want simple, lively narratives of the times, the people, the manners and the customs of old, like these of Miss Hull's set down and circulated among our youth. The schools sadly need interesting reading books at present. . . . 'Pagan Ireland' is not merely a book for children. The simplicity of the narrative, and the deep interest interwoven with it, admirably suit it for holding the attention of the young, but the mass of information, well digested and arranged, which it contains, makes it a most useful book for the average man or woman, who has, in nineteen cases out of twenty, only the haziest idea of early Irish history and Irish mythology. "Celtic Review."

In a short Gaelic preface, the writer dedicates the book to the young people of the London Gaelic League . . . . and she expresses the hope that it may be the means of strengthening

in them the love and knowledge of the old tales and history of Ireland. It is brightly and attractively written, and not only the young people of the Gaelic League, but many other people, young and old, will be glad of the opportunity of reading thus concisely the early history of Ireland. The book fills a place in the literature, not of Ireland only, but of the kingdom; a place which has been too long left vacant; for no nation can live its best life if its people are in ignorance of its past history, and the history of Ireland, while not sufficiently known in Ireland, is almost unknown on the English side of the sea.—"Daily Chronicle."

The multiplicity of unfamiliar names will perplex the careless reader, but many of these old stories are very fascinating, and we do not know of any book which brings them together in such a satisfactory form. The extent of our information about life in pre-Christian Ireland . . . . is quite remarkable . . . . If any such copious sources had existed for the study of early Teutonic life we should never have heard the last of them from the school of Freeman. The present little book should do something to dispel the common ignorance.—"Saturday Review."

Miss Hull is already well known by her fine study of "The Cuchullin Saga" and other works on Celtic lore, and this little book is quite worthy of her. It is very well adapted for use in schools; it is suited to the comprehension of the youngest, and there is not a dull page. As an introduction to the study of Celtic romance it is admirable.—"Weekly Irish Times."

It is as suggestive as history and as inspiring as poetry.—"Glasgow Evening News."

Books have been wanted to bring the old lore to places where fine poetry might not reach, to supply in part the tales told about the fire when Irish was the speech at every hearth, and books were unknown. And they have been forthcoming. 'Pagan Ireland,' by Miss Eleanor Hull (who had before brought out a learned edition of "The Cuchulain Saga"), is an excellent example. Made originally for the members of a Gaelic League branch, it has found a wider audience."Bookman."

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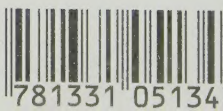

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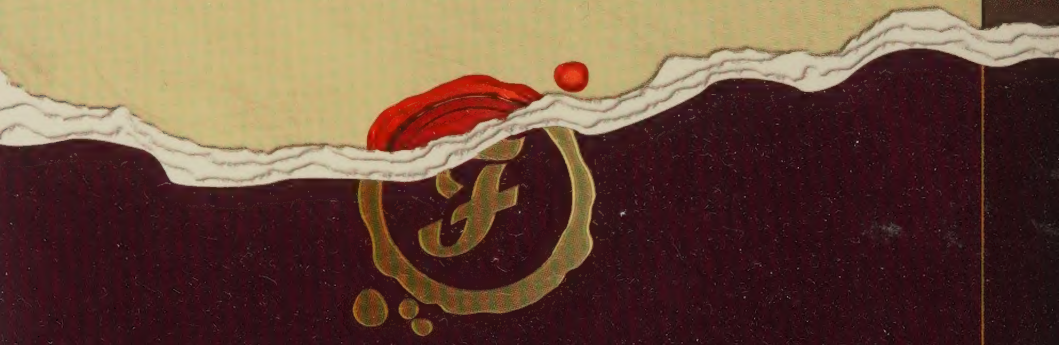

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